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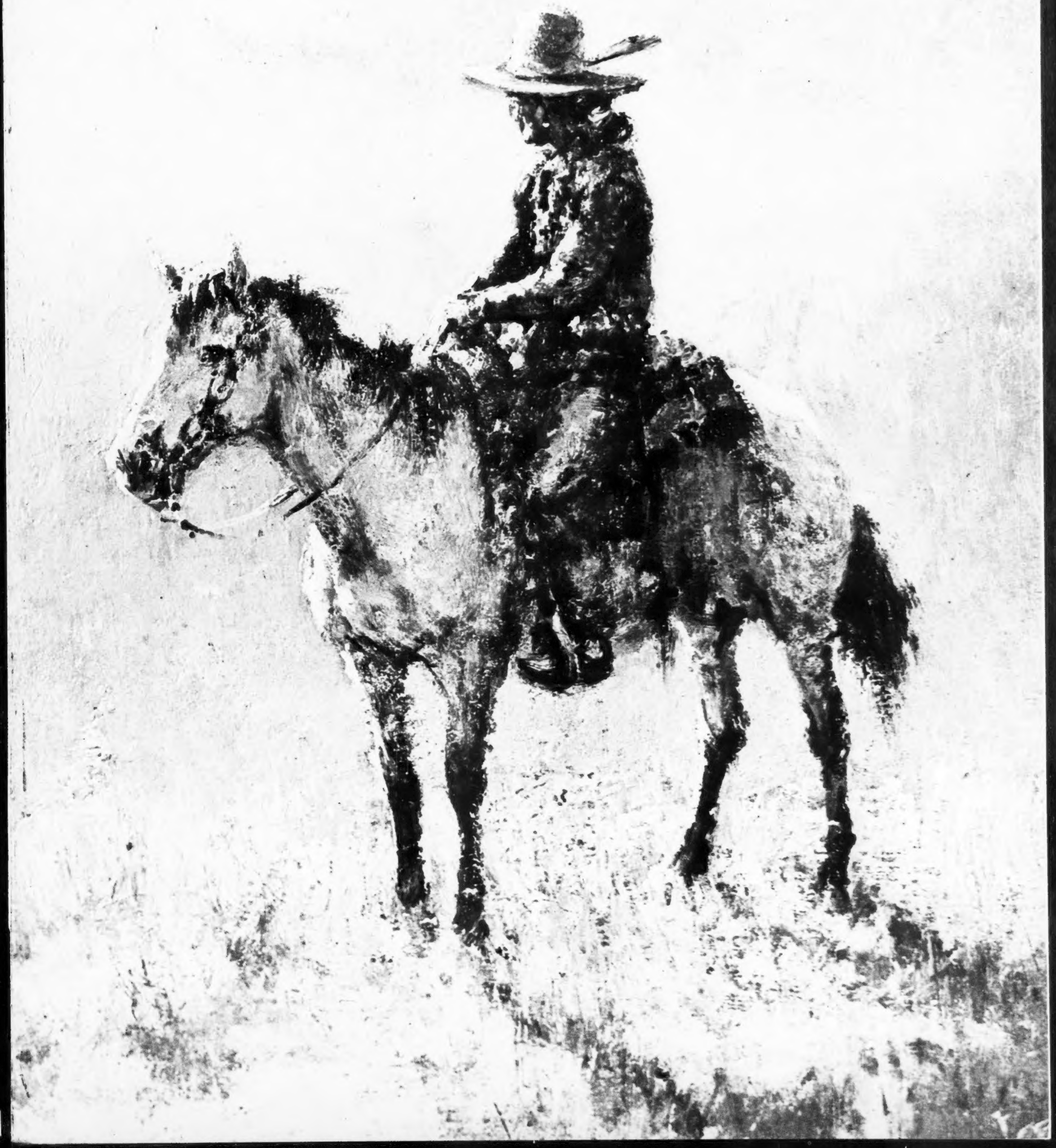

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The Case of the Very-American Militants *by Joseph R. Conlin* 4

A Kid on the Comstock *by John Taylor Waldorf* 11

The Rebellious Horse Conquered *by John I. White* 18

San Francisco and the Vigilante Style: II *by Roger Olmsted* 20

The Amorous Senator *by Gene Fowler* 28

Pug-Nosed Lil and the Girl with the Blue Velvet Band *by Austin and Alta Fife* 32

God Bless Our Happy Ship *by Robert A. Weinstein* 38

Page 48 48

The American West Review 49

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The Benjamin F. Packard, *a "nor'easter" out of Bath, Maine, in the last great days of the Cape Horn run to the ports of the Pacific Coast. For more on the subject, see "God Bless Our Happy Ship" on page 38 (photograph courtesy of the San Francisco Maritime Museum).*

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THE CASE OF THE

Notes on the IWW as a Product and a Reflection of Mainstream America

BY JOSEPH R. CONLIN

THE IWW is one of those historical phenomena about which almost everyone can rattle off an anecdote but which no one seems to understand fully. It is not that the facts are scarce. The outline of the Wobblies' story is simple enough. The union—the Industrial Workers of the World—was founded in Chicago in 1905 by a group of seasoned labor leaders and socialists. They were men who were discontented with the social conservatism of the American Federation of Labor, exemplified by Samuel Gompers' acceptance of capitalism as the ultimate economic structure of the United States. And they deplored the craft structure of the AFL as obsolete and devisive. Unfortunately, the founding fathers agreed on little else, and within a few months of its first convention, the IWW was enmeshed in factional infighting which twice split the tiny union and threatened to ruin it completely.

Somehow the IWW survived its quarrelling, and in 1909 prospects brightened. Beginning that year, the Wobblies led several dramatic and often successful strikes in eastern industrial cities. The most sensational occurred in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in early 1912, with the Wobblies wrestling a united and firmly-entrenched woolens industry to the mat. At about the same time, a series of well-publicized "Free Speech Fights" in West Coast cities, where the region's army of casual laborers passed their winters, put the IWW on the front pages and won them thousands of supporters (and enemies).

The Wobblies never quite capitalized on their eastern successes but, through the Agricultural Workers' Organization (AWO), flourished into the 1920s among the transient workers in the agricultural, construction, and lumber industries of the developing West. The union soon earned the enmity of large-scale commercial interests, newspapers, politicians, and middle-class patriotic groups, but it also had a large following due to its effective "job delegate" system of organization. Perhaps as many as five thousand unsalaried organizers followed and worked the harvests like the casual laborers they were, and organized the bindle stiffs on the job. The AWO quickly became the largest single component of the IWW and aspired to establish itself as a viable representative of the migrant workers. Those hopes were dashed. World War I intervened, and state and federal governments vied with one another to prosecute the nominally antiwar IWW into impotence. The union's leaders were imprisoned, and with the tolerated assistance of extralegal mobs, the membership was dispersed.

Ironically, it was the success of another group of revolutionaries, the Russian Bolsheviks, which sealed the IWW's fate. "The Red Dawn in the East" blinded American radicals to the unique characteristics of their own situation and diverted their energies into channels irrelevant to American conditions. By the mid-1920s the IWW had declined into a tiny cult, a state in which it survives today.

From a historical point of view the IWW has fallen victim to distortions based upon the assumption that the union was no more than an aberration. It is variously portrayed as dangerously antipathetic to American traditions, ineffective because of its extreme alienation from the greater society, or inconsequential—just a colorful ragtag bunch of poetic visionaries in a hard-nosed, practical country.

Each of these arguments has its germs of validity, but it seems a more profitable approach to the study of the IWW to show that the Wobblies were in reality more *like* than unlike their conventional contemporaries. The Wobblies were, after all, molded and formed by the same forces which acted in some degree upon the whole of American society. Another

VERY AMERICAN MILITANTS

look at them, with emphasis on the values which they held in common with early twentieth-century Americans rather than on their differences, will reveal that the IWW moved with the American mainstream at least as often as it bucked the current.

The IWW has been classed as an aberrant movement because of charges that it sanctioned violence and sabotage, scorned political action, and violated the nation's commitment to democratic political process. Finally, the IWW has been characterized as un-American, an alien ideological import into a pragmatic country. The final point requires the least comment. With the exception of a few Italian leaders during the union's brief era in the industrial East, the IWW was headed throughout its history by natives bred in an unmistakably American milieu. The most famous of them, William D. "Big Bill" Haywood, might have sneered that his family was "so American that if traced back it would probably run to the Puritan bigots or the Cavalier pirates," but he saw fit to note his ancestry anyway. Other Wobbly leaders sported similar genealogies and for historical corroboration constantly looked to such American precedents as the Revolution, John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and even Frederick Jackson Turner, rather than to a European revolutionary tradition. Few Wobbly membership lists survive, but police records of mass arrests of Wobblies on the West Coast shortly after 1910 show a ratio between native and foreign-born comparable to a cross-section of the region's population.

The Wobblies' reputation for violence is scarcely more valid. Former Wobbly Ralph Chaplin was correct when he blamed the interpretation of the IWW as "a conspiracy of alien arsonists and dynamiters" on historians who used the "hysterical newspaper headlines of the day as source material." As Richard Brazier, another old Wobbly, wrote, "The IWW, of course, never did have a 'good press' and we were more or less accustomed to being made the whipping boys for something we knew nothing about." A contemporary student of the IWW, sociologist Carlton Parker, observed that "some important portion of IWW terrors can be traced directly to the inarticulated public demand that the IWW news story produce a thrill." But whatever the source of the image, it was and remains a canard. Far from advocating violence, the IWW felt that violence was unnecessary and destructive to its cause. The Wobblies repeatedly urged prudence upon impulsive members and, on numerous occasions, acted positively to avert incidents. When, in January, 1909, a crowd of several thousand men threatened to attack an employment agency in Spokane, a Wobbly leader arrived just in time to cool the mob and invite it to a discussion meeting at the Wobbly Hall. There he persuaded them that *agents provocateurs* in their midst were egging them on in an effort to provide an excuse for police intervention.

The IWW did preach sabotage but defined it in terms considerably different than did the sensationalist press. Actual damage to property was one form of sabotage, the IWW admitted, but it was also the one form which the IWW shunned. (When a Wobbly paper in Spokane obliquely hinted at the violent variety in 1912, it was suspended by the national office.) The word *sabotage* derives from the French *sabots,* the clumsy wooden shoes worn by the peasants who often worked as strikebreakers. Due to their inexperience, their work was notoriously inefficient, so the French unions called upon the workers to return to their factories and work as if they were wearing *sabots* until the bosses caved in. In less connotative terms, then, sabotage was a slowdown. The

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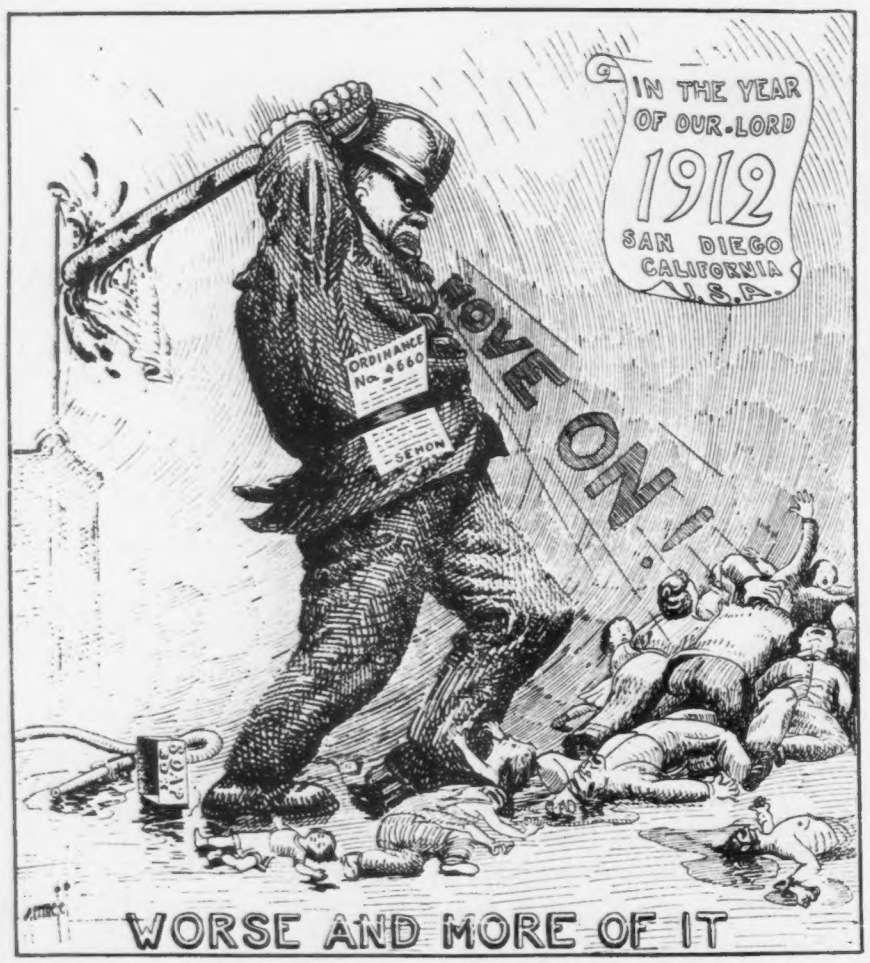


***Free Speech Fights had predictable formats: street speakers berated exploitive employers, who then forced the passage and vigorous enforcement of antisoapbox ordinances. The implementation of San Diego's Ordinance No. 4660 is shown above in the* Industrial Worker.**

Wobblies' notion of sabotage followed this definition and consisted of "striking on the job," a withdrawal of efficiency which hurt the boss "where it hurts him the most, in his pocketbook." Another variety was *la bouche ouverte*, the "big mouth." Waiters should tell diners of their employers' chicanery in the kitchen; clerks should truthfully answer questions about inferior merchandise; and so on. John Graham described this "exact truth telling" as "delicate cruelty," but it is difficult to share his indignation.

In political America, the Wobblies are often adjudged alien to the system because of their disinterest in exerting power and effecting changes through democratic and parliamentary political procedures. It is true that the IWW as an organization, and particularly the western branch, was uninterested in political action. But this state of affairs derived less from any alienation from American traditions than from the simple reality that most western Wobblies could not vote. They were migrant workers, the nature of whose lives made them homeless men and placed them outside the political system. They could not meet the most liberal residency requirements for voting. Thus, there was no hope of using the ballot to repeal the anti-IWW ordinances in Spokane, San Diego, and a dozen other western cities.

Like most policies deriving from specific conditions, however, Wobbly nonpoliticalism varied with local circumstances. For example, the IWW and the strictly political Socialist Party in the Northwest sometimes used the same persons as their delegates; apparently the memberships overlapped. In Butte, Montana, where members of the IWW were sedentary copper miners or smelter workers rather than migrants, they apparently voted in great numbers. These Wobbly votes were likely responsible for the election of Mayor Lewis Duncan's Socialist administration in April, 1911, for after the Socialist Party repudiated the IWW, Duncan failed to be reelected in an easier contest.

But the proof of the IWW's commonality with early twentieth-century American society ultimately depends, not upon correcting the union's historical image, but upon the nature of its positive acts. The IWW's Free Speech Fights have generally been the property of the romanticizers. Between 1909, when the Wobblies first employed the tactic in Missoula, Montana, and 1916, when they abandoned the policy, the IWW staged its battles in twenty-six cities, principally in Washington, Oregon, and California. The pattern of the fights varied little from city to city. The usual precipitant was a Wobbly street-speaking campaign focused on a specific issue, often the corrupt practices of the employment agencies which casual laborers frequented. City councils responded to agency pressures with ordinances prohibiting soapbox speaking. The Los Angeles ordinance was typical:

> It shall be unlawful for any person to discuss, expound, advocate, or oppose the principles or creed of any political party, partisan body, or organization, or religious denomination or sect, or *the doctrines* of any *economic* or social system in any public speech, lecture, or discourse, made or delivered in any public park in the City of Los Angeles.

The ordinances were clearly aimed at the IWW. Spokane's law exempted the Salvation Army, the only other organization much involved in street speaking. San Diego's ban was restricted to the tenderloin district, where the casual laborers congregated. And when President Taft visited Spokane during the dispute over the ordinance and spoke on the streets, a Wobbly commented sardonically:

> The law. The law must be upheld. Taft can speak on the street, and pack it for blocks—yes, so tight that workmen could not get home to their dinner. He was not put in the sweat box. He was not even arrested, although the ordinance was in effect at the time. . . . Taft held up a bundle of papers and said, "This was handed me by the Chamber of Commerce, and you will have to stand for it." As it was impossible to move for two hours, we stood for it. The *Spokesman-Review* says the people don't want to have the revolutionary harangues of the IWW

speakers rammed down their throats. Hundreds of people did not want the harangue of the Chamber of Commerce rammed down their throats by Taft, but they had to stand for it.

But the IWW did not "stand for it." They deliberately defied the law with the object of packing the jails beyond the city's resources to maintain them and clogging the judicial process by demanding individual trials, thus shifting the burden of enforcement from the violator to the enforcer. It was civil disobedience of the sort made famous by the civil rights demonstrators of the early 1960s.

In Missoula, where authorities were flabbergasted by the cheerful lawbreakers, the Wobblies won an easy victory. In Spokane and other cities, things were more difficult. Authorities attempted to meet mass violations with mass arrests (103 soapboxers were arrested on the first day of the Spokane fight, 500 within a month) and by torture within the city jails. Policemen beat the jailed Wobblies in Missoula. In Spokane thirty-six prisoners were forced into a Black Hole of Calcutta so small that several policemen were required to close the door. Other Wobblies were moved alternately from a freezing to a steaming hot cell. In San Diego a mob kidnapped a Wobbly-sympathizer and mutilated him with lighted cigars. In Fresno men were beaten, hosed, and forced to stand knee-deep in water throughout a night.

Whether or not the IWW won its fights usually depended upon how much adverse publicity the town in question was willing to bear. Spokane's city council capitulated after the national press publicized the city's "barbarism" with lines such as a reporter's plaint that "if men had murdered my own mother, I could not see them tortured as I saw IWW men tortured in the city jail." San Diego's city fathers were sterner, and they put the Wobblies to rout.

The Free Speech Fights were certainly thrilling events, full of the color, drama, and little ironies that the Wobblies and their chroniclers were fond of. In order to pack the jails, it was necessary to place on the soapbox many Wobblies who were not polished speakers. In Spokane, one such Wobbly mounted the platform and began with the usual salutation, "Friends and fellow workers—" This had been the signal for the police to move in and arrest the violator. But there was no policeman available, unfortunately for the unprepared Wobbly who, with a bad case of stage jitters, convulsed his audience by shouting, "Where are the cops?" The IWW solved this problem by assigning non-orators to read from the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. In terms of propaganda, the practice carried with it the fringe benefit of having men put under arrest for reciting the basic law of the land. But nothing better illustrates the spirit in which the Wobblies carried out their serious business than a letter received in Spokane at the height of the battle:

Ione, Ore., Jan. 7th, 1910

FELLOW WORKER:

A Demonstration was just held in Sheep Camp No. 1 there being three present, a herder and two dogs. The following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, That we send $10.00 for the free speech fight in Spokane.

Yours for liberty,
THOS. J. ANDERSON

P.S.—Stay with it. I'm coming.—T. J. A.

The color surrounding the disputes is too vivid to ignore. But what, in essence, were the Free Speech Fights all about? They were certainly not revolutionary. They were joined to preserve—and to reassert on the local scene—a right which had a Constitutional amendment and a century of tradition behind it. The IWW's interest in street speaking was not even based primarily on a desire to preach revolution; they wanted the streets open for the purpose of organizing a union. "These

From the **Industrial Worker,** *April 23, 1910.*

In 1910 trouble began to descend on Fresno by the thousands, as "footloose rebels" from all over America converged to test the ban on street speaking and fill the jails. This cartoon in the Industrial Worker *of October 1, 1910, hints at the gathering might of the IWW—and recalls with heavy-handed humor the Spokane victory in January of that year.*

fights were deemed necessary to organization," a Wobbly theorist wrote. "It was thought that without street meetings . . . the jobless, homeless, migratory workers could not be organized." The free-speechers in Missoula and Spokane sought to hold forth on a topic no more incendiary than the corruptions of the "job sharks," agencies which commonly defrauded casual laborers. In San Diego the Wobblies fought their battle in league with American Federation of Labor men, moderate Socialists, single-taxers, and liberals, none of whom were likely to condone anarchistic jeremiads. Hardly confrontations between wild-eyed nihilists and men of the golden mean, the IWW's Free Speech Fights might more accurately be described as disputes between defenders of traditional rights, and corrupt interests willing to trample them.

It also bears mention that the allegedly lawless IWW pursued its objectives within the spirit of the law. That is, although the union systematically violated the restrictive ordinances, it did so not with criminal intent but in order to test and repeal them, in much the same spirit as John Scopes defied the Tennessee antievolution law and the Schechter brothers the National Recovery Act. The IWW was not interested in lawbreaking as such but in demonstrating the injustice of the law through the witness of their imprisonment, and the infeasibility of the law through the disruption caused by its enforcement. If this is not the most desirable means of political expression in a stable society, neither is it antisocial. In view of the Wobblies' political impotence, it was their only alternative.

The IWW affected a great deal of scorn for the law in its propaganda. Bill Haywood told a federal investigating commission that he had been plastered up with injunctions so often that he did not need a pair of pants. But in practice the IWW evinced a regard for keeping within the law which, if grudging, was also circumspect. A Washington State woman testified that she had heard speeches by every major Wobbly agitator in the region and had never heard one "advocate or teach crime." And injunction-beclothed Bill Haywood did not shy away from using the courts, injunctions, and esoteric writs of certiorari when he could benefit from them.

In view of the cynicism with which the Wobblies were prosecuted in so many of their cases, it is likely that the IWW had a more promising vision of the law than its enforcers. In fact, quite out of keeping with the reputation for recalcitrance foisted upon the Wobblies by their enemies and their historians, the IWW proved willing and often adept at negotiation and compromise. The Spokane tangle was settled on such terms. The city agreed to abrogate the obnoxious ordinance, to release all Wobblies held in violation of it, and to cease harassing the IWW's newspaper, the *Industrial Worker*. For their part, the Wobblies agreed to discontinue street speaking and demonstration until the ordinance could be officially repealed, and to withdraw several suits they had filed charging

Uncle Sam Ruled Out

Drawn by Arthur Young

***"That's IWW," said Bill Haywood, making a fist, during the Paterson strike against silk manufacturers caricatured in the 1913* Solidarity.**

city officials with corruption. In San Diego the IWW agreed to a compromise solution worked out by a citizens' group which proscribed but did not prohibit public speeches. The plan provided for the IWW to inform the police three days in advance of all street meetings. The city council, however, rejected the plan, preferring to fight the battle to its bitter end.

To see the Wobblies as contemptuous of conventional society is to ignore their frequent solicitude for public favor, and to judge them by their unfavorable newspaper image is to lose sight of their many supporters among "respectable" and moderate elements in the population. Herman Tucker, an employee of the U.S. Forestry Department in Missoula, was an example. During the Free Speech Fight there in 1909, Tucker was watching from the window of his second-story office when a young logger was arrested on the corner below for reading from the Declaration of Independence. Although not especially sympathetic to the Wobblies, Tucker was incensed by the mockery of the arrest, rushed downstairs, mounted the vacant platform, and continued the reading. He too was arrested.

On November 5, 1916, a group of Wobblies boarded the passenger boat *Verona*, bound from Seattle to Everett, Washington, a lumber mill town from which the IWW had been forcibly expelled a short time before. When the *Verona* docked, it was confronted by an armed posse under Sheriff Donald McRae of Snohomish County, and a gunfight erupted. The *Verona* escaped into Puget Sound by snapping its shore lines, and passengers counted between five and 11 dead and 31 wounded. Many of Everett's citizens angrily blamed the incident on Sheriff McRae. Some openly expressed the hope that the IWW would return and clear the town of its legal terrorists, and some merchants felt constrained to announce that they were not members of the Commercial Club, which backed McRae. Mayor Gill of Seattle issued an angry public attack on McRae, denouncing the sheriff's pretentious deportation of the Wobblies and accusing him of full reponsibility for the massacre. Gill dramatized his partisanship by sending gifts to the Wobblies in jail.

Elmer Smith, a young lawyer in Centralia, Washington, became legal advisor to the IWW local in that city shortly before Armistice Day, 1919, when parading American Legionnaires attacked the IWW hall and, before the day was done, lynched a Wobbly still in his army uniform. Several members of the Legion were killed during the fracas, and Elmer Smith was indicted as accessory to the crime, along with ten Wobblies who had actually been present during the battle. Smith and one other defendant were acquitted, whereupon Smith devoted more than a year to organizing meetings throughout the Pacific Northwest on behalf of those still imprisoned. In 1922 he moved to California, where he continued to attack the laws and trials which made convicts of men he regarded as innocent victims.

Another forgotten facet of the IWW was that it served in many of the mining, smelter, railroad, and lumber mill towns of the West as a social organization, a workingman's fraternal lodge. Most of the time the IWW hall was used not for planning strikes but as a library and reading room, casual rendezvous, and dance hall. In a sense, the IWW was a surrogate church, a focal point for the social life of the laborers in the dismal and isolated industrial towns of the region. That is not a very colorful picture, calculated to appeal to romanticizers, but it is a facet of the IWW depicted in a dozen old photographs, and it places the union somewhere this side of un-American activities.

The IWW did not consider itself alien or irrelevant to accepted mores but assumed that it deserved support from nonproletarians. "The IWW does not give me the right to act against the common good," the *Industrial Union Bulletin* stated as early as 1907. "There is no such thing as the right to do as I please." Wobbly theorist Justus Ebert felt that progressives and liberals should support the IWW because to them "the IWW is the proletarian forerunner of the new society, the militant protestant against capitalist reaction." The claim was less a statement of fact than a plea, for Ebert added appreciatively that progressive support was frequently responsible for Wobbly successes. The Wobblies continued to appeal to the middle class. During a 1913 trial of Wobblies in Marysville, California, for incidents arising from a riot on a hop ranch near Wheatland, the IWW solicited assistance from, among other groups, the Women's Clubs of California. "As you are women," the letter read, "we are sure of your sympathy for the men now facing death and for their innocent families." It was hardly the manifesto of the cartoon-caricatured anarchist.

Nor was the statement of William D. Haywood that if the Wobblies involved in the Centralia Massacre were guilty, they should be punished. In fact, Haywood, the undisputed leader of the union by the time of World War I, effected numerous accommodations which he hoped would gain the union public acceptance, if not public favor. Realizing the havoc which patriotic passions could wreak on the union and hoping to avoid it, he urged members not to emphasize their opposition to the war and conscription but to concentrate on trade union goals. During the war, Haywood saw that potentially offensive lyrics in the IWW's *Little Red Songbook* were deleted. After the war, his assistant and confidant Ralph Chaplin tried to steer the IWW in a technocratic direction. He hoped to transform the union into something of a research bureau which would collect and publish information on the American economy, because a "high class educational program would add to the prestige of the IWW while it was under attack from so many quarters."

One of the most curious and obscure Wobbly activities during the era was the organization's tacit support of prohibition. The idea of rough-hewn Wobblies pulling alongside bluestockinged Republican dowagers and clerical conservatives in what was the safest conventional piety of the day seems preposterous if one persists in envisioning the Wobblies

Continued on page 62

A KID ON THE COMSTOCK

Recollections of a Virginia City Boyhood by John Taylor Waldorf

CHILDREN WERE SELDOM SEEN on the Comstock in the early days when Sandy Bowers was a millionaire and his missus, Eilly Orum, in velvet and furs rode her shining victoria from the mansion in Washoe Valley up Gold Canyon to parade her elegance along Virginia City's C Street. It was a wild world, with brawling and lawsuits and overlapping claims. Attorneys in high boots sported ready derringers, while they made thousands in fees; and disappointed clients defied court decisions, fortifying their mining shafts and arming their miners with muskets. Most folks agreed it was no place for a child. But by 1873, the year the Big Bonanza arched black and glittering along the drifts of the Consolidated-Virginia, there was law and order. Hundreds of youngsters swarmed over the sides of Mount Davidson.

Among them was Johnny Waldorf, who arrived in camp that year at the age of three and lived in a boy's paradise until he was not quite sixteen. For, with all its progress, Virginia City was still dirty, noisy, dangerous, tough, and all silver—a heady mix of altitude, sharp mountain air, the never-ceasing boom of stamp mills, the thump of underground pumps, the clang of fire bells and the clatter of stagecoaches and freighting teams that fostered a climate of continual expectation. Waldorf finally ran away to seek his fortune in 1886, but he never forgot his boyhood landscape.

For the remainder of an adventurous life, never dull and never without high hopes—as tramp printer, newspaperman, political campaigner, government official, and corporation publicist—these years in Virginia City became a powerful counterweight to all he saw and heard and learned. Somehow, nothing could hold a candle gleam to the years in that Nevada mining town on the sunrise side of Mount Davidson.

When Waldorf was thirty-five and a successful San Francisco journalist, he took time out from crusading against municipal corruption for Fremont Older's *Bulletin* and set down his memories of the "Virginia" years in a series of articles for the newspaper. Sixty years later, his daughter, Dolores Waldorf Bryant, rescued the stories from the aging files of the *Bulletin* and added an introduction and detailed commentaries. The result was *A Kid on the Comstock,* first published by the friends of the Bancroft Library in a limited edition in 1968. A revised, enlarged, and fully illustrated edition of *A Kid on the Comstock* will be issued by the American West Publishing Company this month. The gallery of photographs and quotations that follow have been taken from the new edition.

John Waldorf at 35.

A view of C Street, ca. 1880.

"To be raised in a mining camp means an experience as full of thrills and wounds and scars as going to the wars. You who have tried it and survived its perils deserve service medals. If I ever meet Andy Carnegie, I'm going to speak to him about it. I want a piece of that kind of junk myself. I shall never forget the mining camp that held me captive for thirteen golden years of youth. Often in those bygone days I had fretted like a prisoner, but the great world has taught me that only childhood knows true liberty. . . . The people who built up Virginia City and gave it the greatness of the '70s were the salt of the earth, and the breed has not died out."

The Storey County Court House.

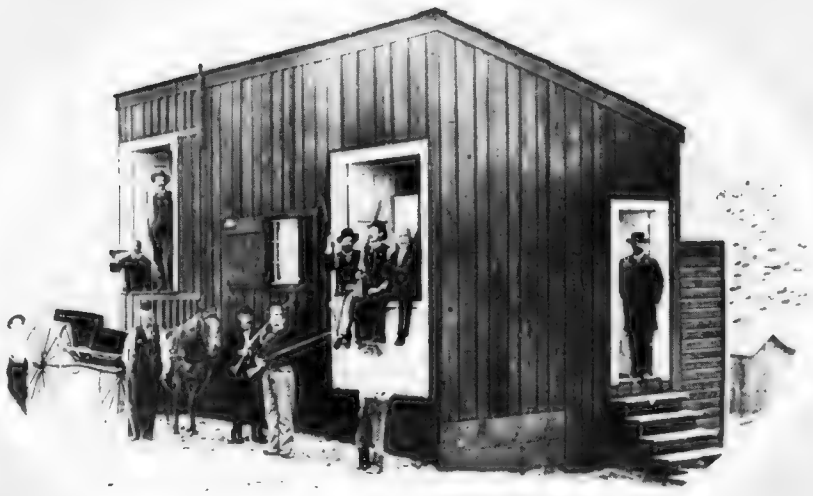
Miners at the head of the Utah Mine shaft.

"Our dads wanted to do all the gambling themselves. The stronger the game the better they liked it. They risked their lives every time they went to work, and when a man gambles with what God gave him, he isn't apt to hesitate over staking what he has picked up for himself."

General Grant and party on a Comstock visit, 1879.
John W. Mackay at the far right, James G. Fair at the far left.

"In my day Mackay and Fair were familiar figures on the Comstock. Fair's visits were frequent, those of Mackay were few and at long intervals; but we children learned to look upon Mackay as the kindest man in the world . . . It won't take long to tell why we used to think so much of John Mackay. In the first place he had a pleasant pastime habit of scattering money among the gangs of small boys who used to hang around the mines. This, however, wasn't the main thing. His claim to our affections was based principally on what he did whenever he went to the theater in Virginia City....Each performance in Piper's Opera House meant forty or fifty penniless small boys hoping for miracles as they stood outside the entrance. Old John Piper would sit in the box office and scowl at us until his fat face was all wrinkles. Then Mackay would come along, not his head toward the gang, and say, 'John, how much for the bunch?' That is why we never envied John Mackay. We wanted him to live forever and always be rich."

James G. Fair's "mansion" on B Street.



National Guard Shooting House.

"Fourth of July was a day of early rising. We used to get up before the sun lit up the streets, but not before the beams had begun to caress the flag on Mount Davidson. The splendor that the Stars and Stripes borrowed from Heaven made our hearts beat with a fierce patriotism and filled us chock full of a brand of enthusiasm that meant trouble for the timid, nervous folk who dreaded redheads, bombs, and double-headed Dutchmen. . . . I shall never forget those double-headers. They were the Captain Kidds of fireworks. With an honest explosion they started on their journey, flew straight to the victim, and at the critical moment completed their usefulness by another explosion, louder than the first. . . . The parades of those old days! They were worth seeing. The town had more kinds of soldiers than Napoleon ever marshaled under his banners. The Emmet Guards in the glory of Irish green with soldierly Captain Peter Dunne at their head; the Washingtons in red, the Nationals in blue, the Montgomerys, the Sarsfields, the Tigers, the battery of artillery, three or four brass bands, plenty of color, plenty of noise. It was glorious."

The Emmett Guard on parade, July 4, 1880.

"My first fire was something to be remembered. I recall with regret the inability of the firemen to master it before it had desolated two-thirds of Virginia City, but I wasn't sorry the day it happened. I was five years old then, and the thought that hundreds of people were losing their homes never occurred to me. The world seemed to be burning up, but somehow I had no fear, and the boys around me were equally callous. It was better than a circus. It was a great day. Not until night were the flames brought under control, and when at last I was tucked away in bed, I was still smiling. Many a little boy was without a home, but we heathens of what was left of Virginia City never thought of that. We had seen something to delight the vandal heart of childhood. We had drunk deep of the joy of it, and nothing could rob us of our recollections."

Volunteer firemen of Company No. 5.

"We shall always hold close and deep our memories of 'Virginia', the town of our early joys, the town of friends who never forget, the town that we shall recall with smiles and sighs and tears so long as a stick or stone remains and the sagebrush grows at the foot of the dumps."

The Rebellious Horse Conquered

In Which Charlie Russell Depicts for the Readers of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper *the Correct Method of Reducing a Maverick Cayuse to Cowed and Meek Submission*

PRESENTED BY JOHN I. WHITE

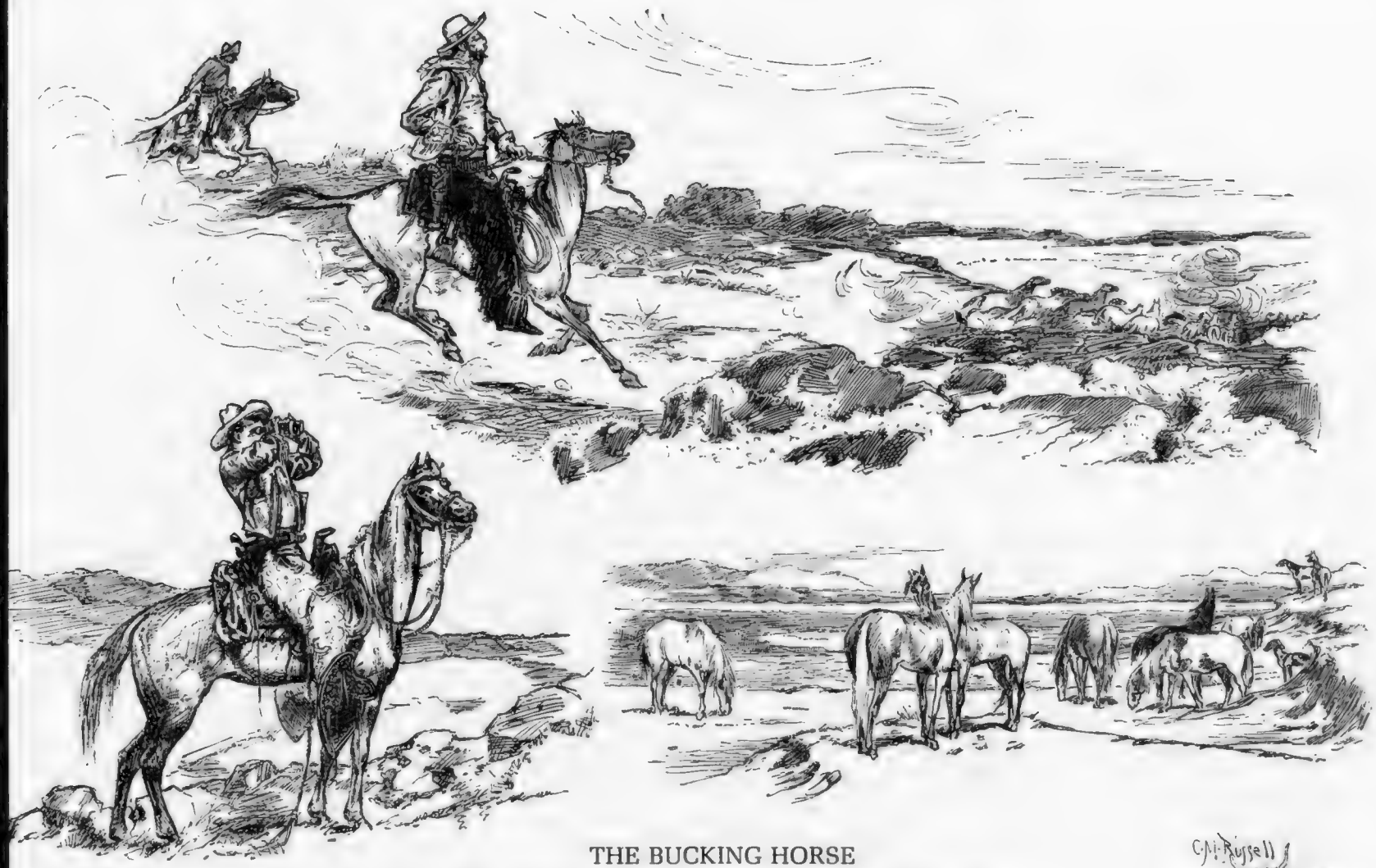
Being wheedled by your wife into entering an antique shop is not necessarily a bad thing. The last time this happened to me, I spotted a pile of old newspapers fresh from somebody's attic, with a sign $1 EACH. On top was a copy of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* for May 18, 1889. Intrigued by the luxuriant whiskers of Admiral David Porter, whose picture virtually filled the front page, I picked up *Leslie's* and leafed through it. Inside was a page of line drawings signed C. M. Russell, which I had never before seen in print. Never in my life have I opened my wallet with more enthusiasm.

These delightful sketches were published when the artist was only twenty-five and still cowboying in Montana's Judith Basin, his range since leaving the family home in eastern Missouri at sixteen. They appear to be the second of his works to get into print. The first was an oil painting, "Caught in the Act," reproduced a year earlier in *Harper's Weekly* (May 12, 1888). In this poignant winter scene, which hangs today in the Montana Historical Society Museum at Helena, two cowboys with rifles at the ready are confronting a family of starving Indians butchering a stolen beef in the snow.

Along with Russell's signature, the name J. H. Smith is included on the page from *Leslie's.* In *The Charles M. Russell Book,* issued in 1957, art critic and author Harold McCracken mentions these drawings and says Smith was another artist "to whom the editors had obviously assigned the task of redrawing the pictures to make them more acceptable for use." I would interpret this to mean it was necessary for a magazine staff member to go over the work of an inexperienced illustrator in order to adapt it to the photoengraving process. Perhaps it was Smith who lengthened the horns of Russell's customary trademark, the buffalo skull, in this case making it resemble a Texas steer. In any event, these early examples of cowboys and horses in action—particularly the tensed-up, blindfolded horse at the left (bottom of the facing page) and the near catastrophe in the lower right corner—have the master touch that later was to make Charlie Russell famous.

To help its readers interpret Russell's illustrations, *Leslie's* printed the facing lengthy paragraph, unsigned and probably put together by an eastern rewrite man who omitted one highly important detail. If Charlie had been telling how to ride an outlaw horse, he certainly would not have forgotten the highly complicated business of putting on a saddle.

John I. White *is a professional radio singer who has been collecting, collating, and interpreting cowboy songs and poetry for more than thirty years. He is also an authority on other forms of western literature and has written extensively on cowboy folklore for such periodicals as* Montana *magazine. His "A Busted Cowboy's Christmas" appeared in the November, 1967, issue of* THE AMERICAN WEST.

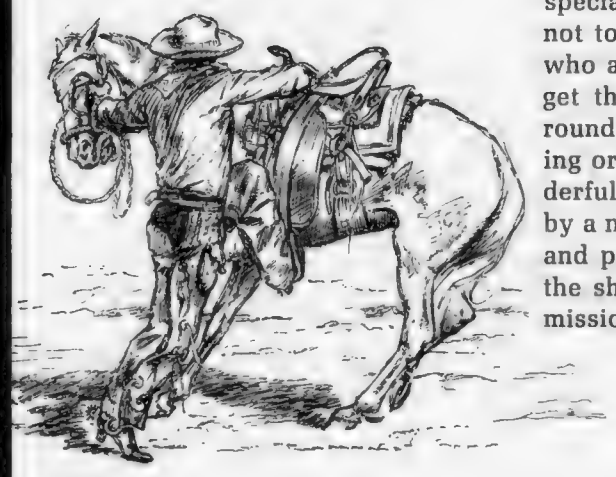


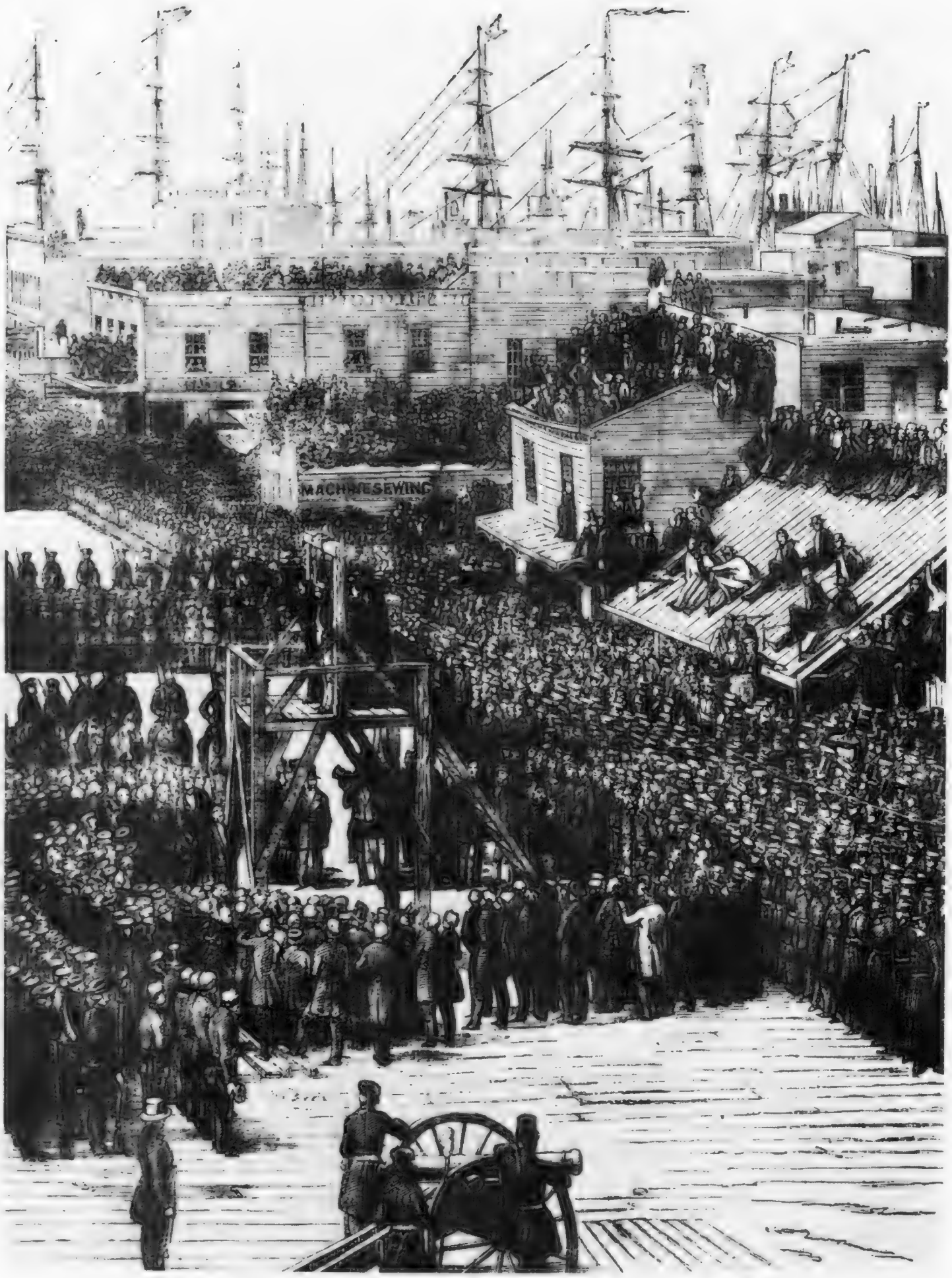
C.M. Russell
J.H. Smith

THE BUCKING HORSE

Most persons who have witnessed the vicious and acrobatic antics of the "bucking broncos" in Buffalo Bill's and other wild western shows have supposed that the animals were merely acting a part to which they had been trained, like the trick mule of the circus. The fact is that these traits are in the nature of the beast; and what the horses do on exhibition is as nothing to the diabolical contortions which they go through when endeavoring to unseat a cowbow rider on their native prairies. The broncos of the Southwest, like the cross-bred Indian and cayuse ponies of Montana, are not usually broken until they are four or five years old, and then their training is of the rudest and most impromptu character. Individual animals, like individual men, exhibit tempers and idiosyncrasies of their own; but even the best-tempered cow ponies will sometimes buck on a frosty morning. Such "mavericks" are turned over to hands who make a specialty of conquering horses that are determined not to be ridden, for a great many thorough cowboys who are good horsemen in the sense of being able to get the best work out of their string of steeds in a roundup do not pretend to be able to sit a hard-pitching or vicious animal. The horse-tamer, with his wonderful lariat, brings the rebellious horse to the ground by a noose around one of the forefeet; then he mounts and pursues his dare-devil, anti-bucking tactics until the shaggy pony is dazed and cowed into meek submission.

—From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 18, 1889.





The machinery of vigilance, 1856 style: To the entertainment (and edification) of several thousand spectators, the "Great" Committee of Vigilance dispatched the murderers Heatherington and Brace on July 29 with cool and impressive ceremony.

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE VIGILANTE STYLE: II

"Absolute Obedience, Absolute Secrecy"—
Part Two of a Two-Part Article on the
Vigilance Committees of 1851 and 1856

Continued from the January, 1970, Issue

BY ROGER OLMSTED

IT FREQUENTLY HAS BEEN OBSERVED, often with a sort of righteous conviction, that complete disregard for civic responsibility (not to mention rather faint standards of personal ethics) was *part* of the glorious outburst of human energy that peopled the American West and developed its resources, built its cities and established its commerce. It was indeed. And while it is patently absurd to insist that economic development is a product of moral turpitude, there is no doubt that careless enthusiasm does get things built up, torn down, dug, filled, bought, sold, traded, and pushed around. The reckless irresponsibility of the characteristic San Franciscan of the early 1850s brought law and government to ruin, but it seemed to be great for business and building. Land prices, rents, and profits advanced to levels that would have been accounted ridiculous anywhere else in the country, and continued to advance through the end of 1852. In that year about 67,000 immigrants landed at San Francisco, and another 30,000 or so came overland to California; toward the end of the year, gold production hit perhaps its highest rate. In '53 the tide of immigration began to ebb; the export of gold reached its peak, but production was insensibly on the wane.

The momentum of the entrepreneureal enterprise released in gold-rush San Francisco carried the business of city building through 1854 and beyond. Commodity prices slipped in 1853; rents and real estate started a downward trend the following year; gold production was definitely off in 1854—though it was still widely believed that the decline was temporary. Yet it was in these years, from late 1852 through 1855, that the city took on a look of permanency. Stone paving appeared in some of the principal streets, as did street lamps (first oil, then gas). Pretentious commercial buildings, hotels, and theaters, built of granite from China or the Sierra, or of brick faced with stone or stucco, sprang up all over the downtown district. "Fireproof" warehouses lined the streets close to the waterfront. Plank roads led to favorite resorts near the Mission. The comfortable homes of the well-to-do spotted the slopes of Rincon Hill, and an astute promoter had gone so far as to lay out an imitation of a fashionable London residential square on the sunny southern slope of that hill.

The historian J. S. Hittell quite rightly marked 1853 as a turning point in the fortunes of San Francisco; from this date through the remainder of the decade lies the period he called "The Golden Era in Decline." But Hittell had the benefit of hindsight. Such astute observers as the authors of *The Annals of San Francisco,* writing in the early part of 1854, saw no impending decline. Their description of the state of the citizenry expands on the evils of prostitution and divorce, the popularity of dueling, the wretched prospects of anyone so unfortunate as to lose his health and livelihood. As for the healthy male with gold in his pocket, it still seemed the same old San Francisco—a city of golden dreams.

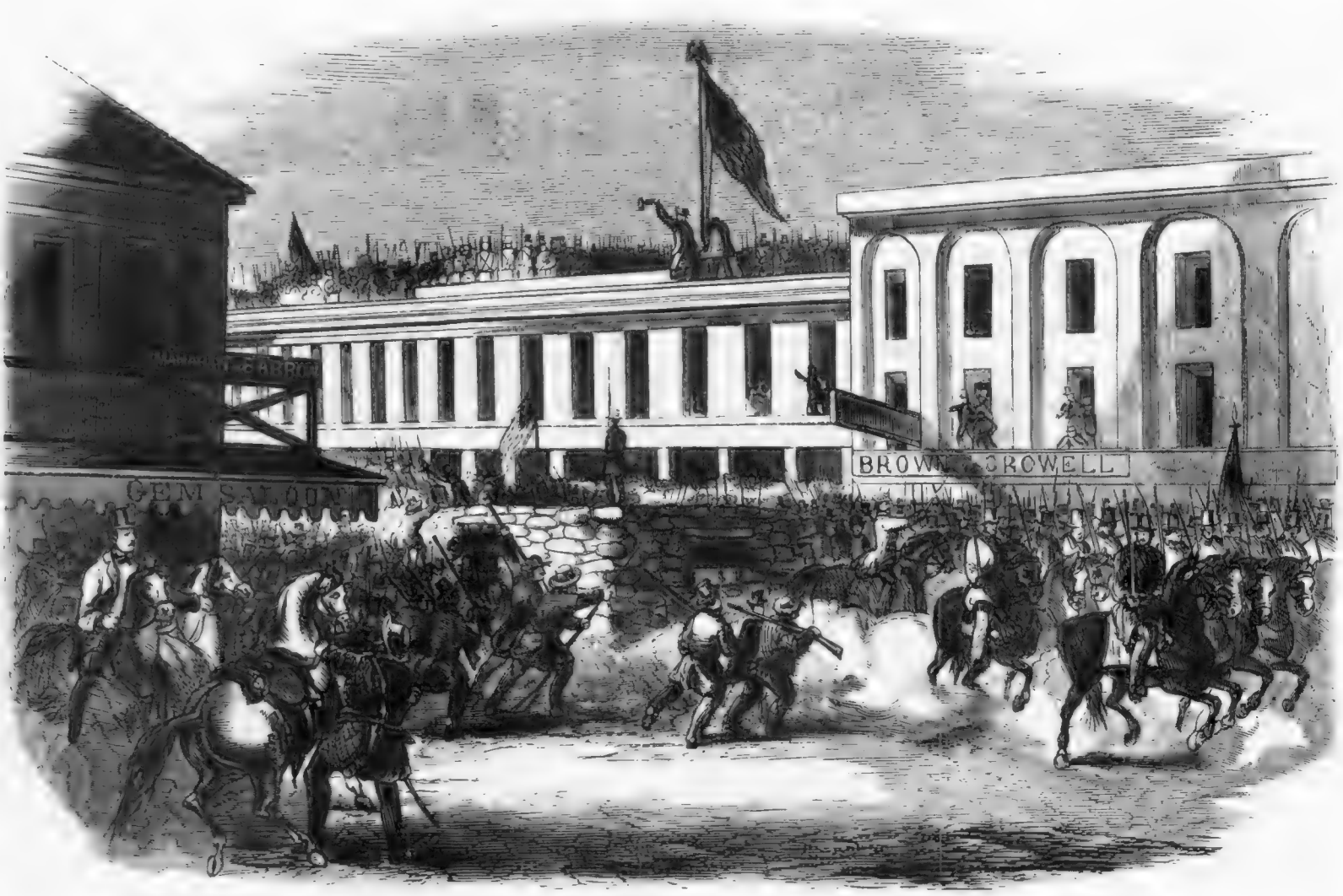
At the beginning of 1855 the San Francisco banks were in a precarious position. The decline in the value of real estate and merchandise, in rents and in profits, made it increasingly difficult to convert substantial assets, however real or great, into ready cash. The biggest and most influential banks were perhaps in the most insecure position, since they had pursued the most liberal policies. The biggest bank, Page, Bacon & Co., was the first to fall. In February of 1855 news reached San Francisco that the par-

ent house in St. Louis was going under. Although the resident partners in San Francisco claimed that the local house was a separate institution and in no danger, they could not stave off a run on the bank. When mighty Page, Bacon had to suspend payments, depositors of other banks thought that it might be best to sleep with their money under the mattress for a night or two. William T. Sherman, of Civil War fame, then manager of Lucas, Turner & Co. (one of the only banks that did not have to suspend payment at least temporarily), said that it was at his counter that a Frenchman, half-dead in the crush, gasped, "If you got the money, I no want him; but if you no got him, I want it like the devil."

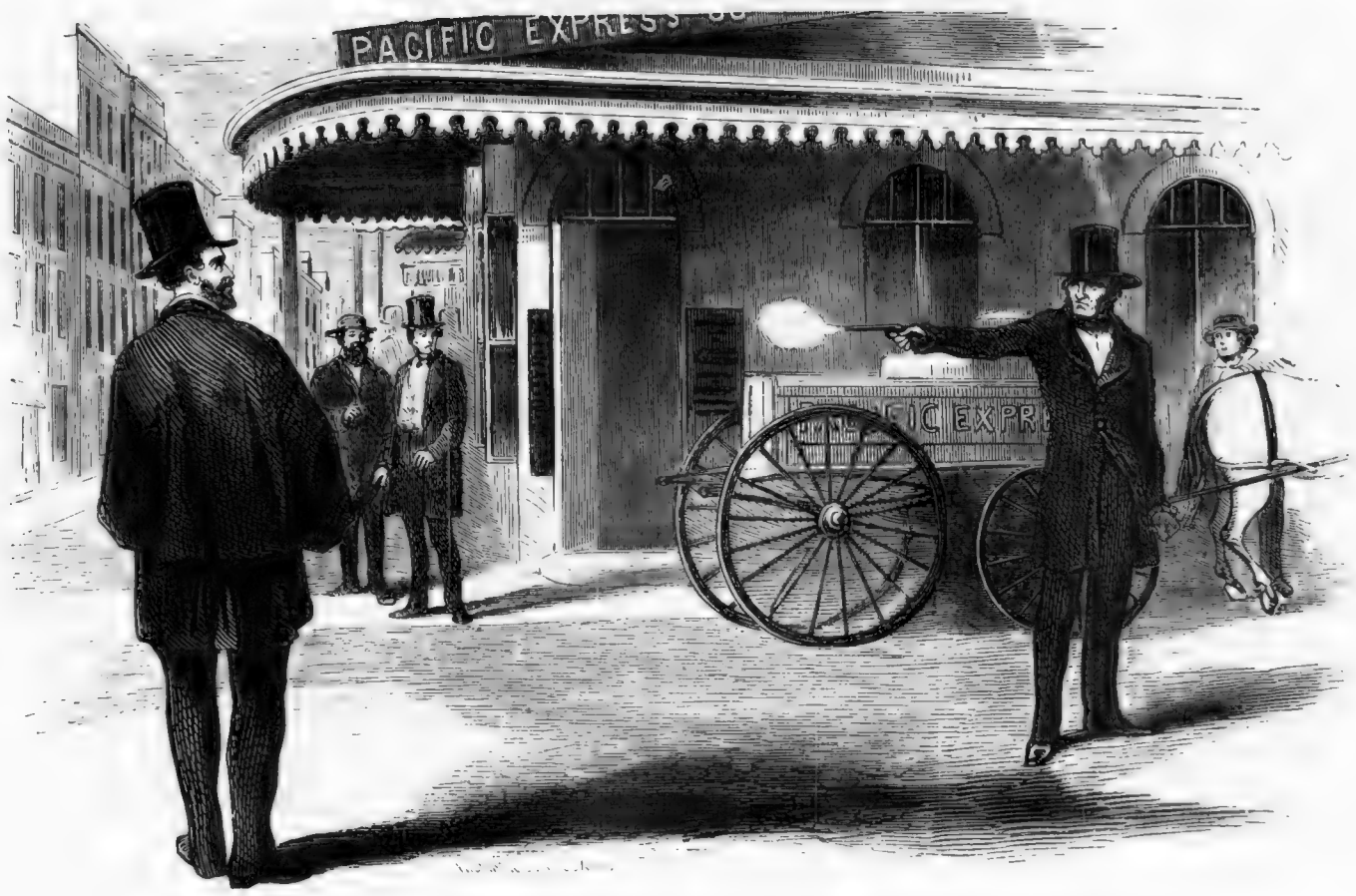
The failure of Page, Bacon was immediately followed by the collapse of Adams & Co., the proprietors of the vast express and banking business that Wells, Fargo succeeded to, and certainly the biggest business institution in the state. The blow of such a failure, which injured thousands of citizens, was compounded by suspicion of deliberate fraud, for Adams & Co. closed its doors long before it had paid out its available reserves of cash and gold. The assets of the company were turned over to a receiver selected by the partners, and wound up in the hands of Palmer, Cook & Co., a banking house which was involved in various irregular dealings with the state treasury and which, there was reason to believe, had been wont to exchange favors with the ubiquitous political boss, David C. Broderick.

THE BANK PANIC and general business depression of 1855 was more than an incident in the economic history of San Francisco, for it resulted in a reappraisal by many of the citizenry of their true conditions and long-term interests—with results that were dramatic in the extreme. As long as speculation was the chief business of the merchant class, as long as a seemingly permanent boom endorsed any man's greediest fantasies, the private citizen had good reason to leave public affairs to those who chose to speculate in that business. Not that the best citizens were indifferent to the conduct of their elected officials: they protested enough, and sometimes threw some rascals out, and they supported new ordinances and charters that promised a government more useful and more economical to the taxpayer. But full-time practitioners of corruption necessarily prevailed over casual advocates of reform, particularly since nobody who was anybody was getting hurt too much. Where "everyone" is getting rich, municipal corruption often is the object of a kind of rueful civic pride. Such was the general attitude of the citizens of San Francisco until the bubble burst. Then suddenly, the unmerited affluence of fraudulently elected officials became an affront increasingly hard to put up with.

The case of one prominent person—



Absolute obedience:Fort Vigilance calls out 4,000 armed men.

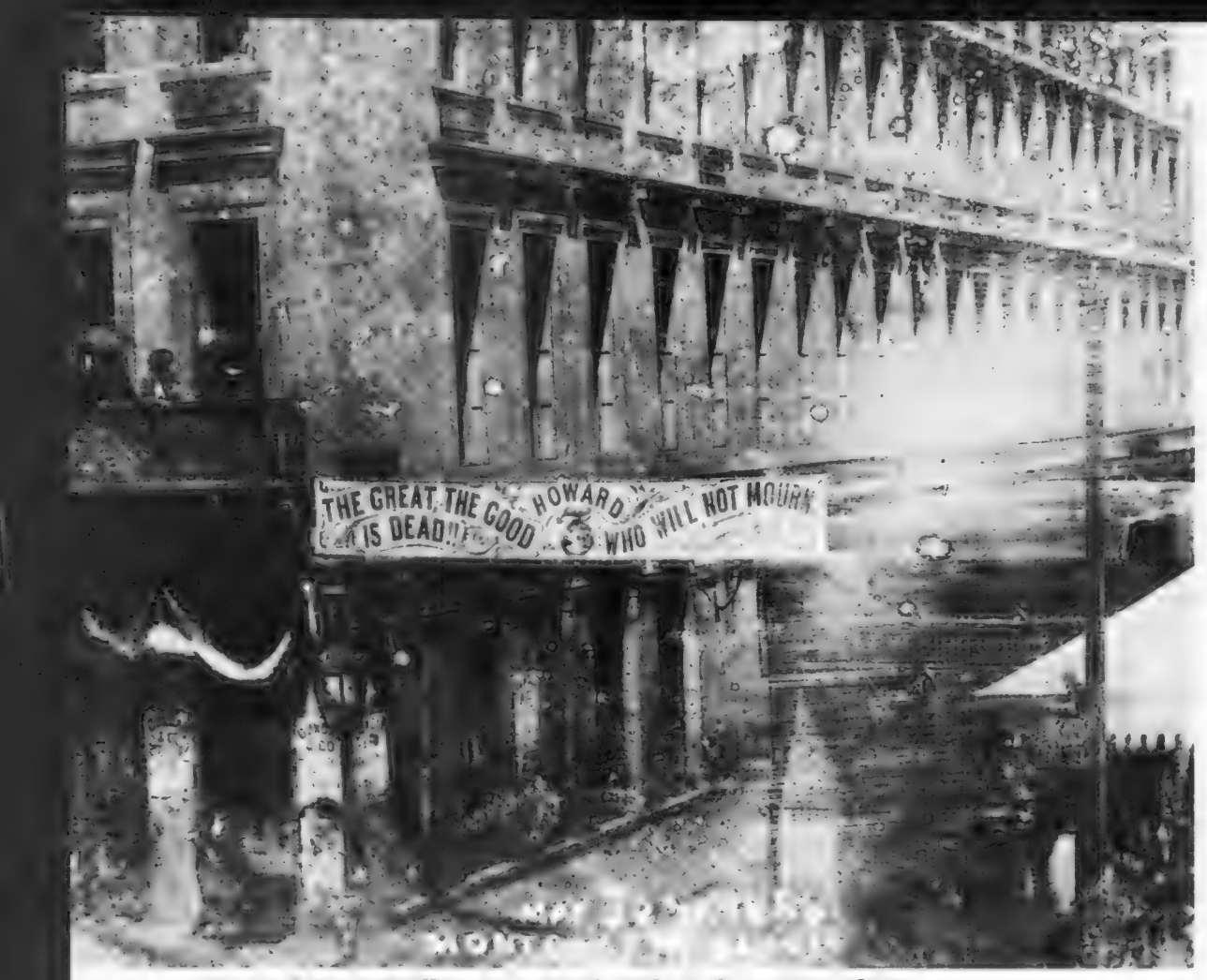


The assassination of James King of William, at the corner of Montgomery and Washington Streets—an epochal event even to Frank Leslie's New York-based* Illustrated Newspaper *(issue of July 19, 1856).

admittedly an extreme case, a case that in its untimely conclusion led directly to armed revolution in San Francisco—illustrates the connection between financial disaster and civic reform. This young personage, James King of William (the name itself suggests some insistence upon notoriety), had been one of the first bankers in San Francisco, both in point of time and in importance and reputation. Embarrassed (i.e., potentially bankrupt) as the result of land dealings in the interior of the state, he retired from proprietorship in 1854, taking his accounts, good will, good name, and liabilities over to Adams & Co., where he was installed as cashier, a position roughly equivalent to "manager." The failure of Adams & Co. robbed King of his income and prospects, but he still had an "insider's" knowledge of the kind of dubious maneuverings that had brought him, probably through no fault of his own, to a low estate. As energetic as he was vindictive, King scraped up the capital to start a newspaper and proceeded to assault the ill-defined but real alliance in corruption that extended from Palmer, Cook & Co., to the lowliest ballot box stuffer in the volunteer fire department.

King's *Evening Bulletin* was an immediate success. The unrestrained editorial attacks by this knowledgeable, respected, and bitter young publisher both fed and capitalized on growing popular discontent with the prevailing system. If his charges were often vague or did not admit of proof, that was the approved journalistic style of the day; if his life were threatened, that was the approved anti-journalistic style, and he might carry a gun. Inevitably, he was shot. But the fates conspired to see that James King of William's final misfortune was not overlooked.

The man who shot King was James P. Casey, editor of the obscure *Sunday Times*, foreman of the Crescent Engine #10 fire company, and an inspector of elections who had recently turned up winner of the Board of Supervisor's seat for his ward, though nobody had even known he was running. The *Bulletin* of Tuesday, May 14, 1856, had published the fairly well-known truth that Casey had served a term at Sing-Sing before repairing to San Francisco. Later that afternoon, when King left his office on Merchant Street, Casey stepped out of the Bank Exchange, a favorite resort in the Montgomery Block. He called to his enemy and, when King turned, shot him at fifteen paces, putting the ball from a Navy Colt through his left breast. King staggered into the express office at the corner of Montgomery and Washington, and collapsed on the floor. Casey hastened to the protection of the jailhouse, while those of his partisans who witnessed the event recounted that Casey, in the best tradition of the *code duello* (Western Street Division), had called to King, "Draw and defend yourself!" before he shot down his armed opponent.



James King of William was dead, and on the corner where he was gunned down (the awning of the Pacific Express Co., illustrated on the previous page, is shown at the bottom right) the Howard Fire Engine Company No. 3 strung a mournful banner.

Such niceties of detail, they thought, would be of great moment on the distant day of Casey's fair and formal trial before a body of his peers. But Casey had shot the archduke, and the details now at issue had nothing to do with courts and cops and cross-examination.

The first detail to be decided was whether or not Casey would be hanged by the mob that very night. If good, simple-minded Sam Brannan had been in town to harangue the populace—Sam, who had stood on the banks of the American River in the summer of '48 collecting tithes from the Mormon miners as soon as they washed their gold; Sam, who had led the 1851 Committee of Vigilance to hang Jenkins in the dark of night; Sam, who had as recently as the previous November been arrested and restrained for inciting the people to promptly hang the gambler Charles Cora, killer of U.S. Marshal Richardson—if Sam had been in town, there might have been vengeance before dawn. But Sam was out of town, and the leader of the mob was Thomas King, brother of the not-yet-dead martyr, as weak as he was inflammatory. The man whose sleeve was plucked by those who sought action rather than oratory was Brannan's cold-blooded rival in extra-legal citizenship, William Tell Coleman.

It will be recalled that Coleman was the instigator of the popular tribunal of February, 1851, that formal but illegal court that fortunately had failed to convict the false Stuart. Coleman had come to the fore in Brannan's vigilance committee after the initial excitement; and when the "committee of the whole" adjourned, his more patient determination was among the qualities that placed him in the executive committee to maintain the purely vigilant function of the organization.

When, during the alarums and excursions of the evening following King's shooting, Coleman was first asked by various of the aroused citizens to take charge of a popular movement and personally lead a reconstituted vigilance, he says that he approved the idea but declined the leadership. Being pressed again, as groups met in several places to agitate reorganization, he agreed to issue the call, as *one* of "The Thirteen" representing the last executive council of the 1851 committee, and in the name and by the order of the "Committee of Thirteen." The notice to members of the vigilance committee to meet on the evening of May 15 appeared in the morning newspapers. When they met and Coleman was for the third time offered the crown, his reply was ready. "On two conditions I will accept the responsibility: absolute obedience, absolute secrecy." The desirability of the conditions being agreed, an organization quite different from the vigilance committee of 1851 sprang into being in so few minutes that one might imagine that Coleman had spent more than a little time day-dreaming about the ideal structure of vigilance.

The vigilance committee of 1856—the *Great* Vigilance Committee—was very much an extension of the personality of William T. Coleman. It was his to a vastly greater extent than the committee of 1851 had been Brannan's. In '51 Brannan *happened* to be at the center of an organization. The nature of the first committee, its "institutional personality," was more akin to Brannan's behavior than to Coleman's; it was an organization of conflicting interests and blunt confrontations (in one of which Sam was worsted and retired, temporarily, in a grand huff), an organization of the sort that could lend itself to the plot of a classic western epic. In '56 Coleman *built* an organization that represented the distilled experience of an intelligent and single-minded revolutionary.

"Revolutionary?" Yes: for what else is armed seizure of power? To pursue the point: How many revolutionaries can one name who three times overthrew their government with signal success, and between uprisings had time to think upon the elements of failure in their success? An accident of circumstance? This was the man who on February 22, 1851, talked to his fellows in the street, observed the mob about the city hall clamoring for "Stuart's" neck, went home to change from his Sunday best to daily wear (don't scuff the velvet in a common riot), and returned to push

his way through the multitude, mount the balcony in the face of a dozen shrieking demagogues, and outline the details by which the popular will was to be done —and *was* done. It had been a blow to cool Coleman that the object of his popular tribunal was not achieved; also a stroke of luck, as it turned out, that an innocent man was not solemnly hanged; a lesson in ends and means that his dramatic seizure of power was limited to a goal so trifling as the execution of a single misidentified scoundrel.

"Judicial Democracy!" Coleman worked through that, too, with the first vigilance committee. A committee of two hundred was Brannan's style: Say your piece and vote your choice; I'm your better, but you're my equal; hear me out and hang him if you've guts enough! Old style, true style; right is right and *damnation!* whiskey is dear and villians are cheap, and there's nothing can't be set right by tonight or tomorrow—if you've *guts!* But three months' work, with detectives and police and investigations and examinations, with the niceties and nuances of relations with the public and the state and the courts and city hall, with correspondence and assessments and duty-lists—why that is *Eternal* Vigilance, a test in management and administration, not a fair fight between Right and Wrong. An efficient executive council is required for such work, not a town meeting of the Good Guys; and as the first vigilance committee grew to six hundred members, and as its work grew duller and more expensive, it necessarily developed an administrative organization.

"Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie" is perhaps the most appropriate definition of the constitution that Coleman handed down to his colleagues of the 1856 committee, for it implied a structure akin to those that have more recently developed in accordance with variations on the theory of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." To form the initial executive committee, Coleman chose five trustworthy associates, and these chose others, with his approval. All power was in the hands of the executive committee, including the power to accept or reject applicants for general membership and to cast out any member who did not behave himself. The general membership was formed into military companies, and while the rank and file had no control over the organization, there was provision for "feedback," in that the executive committee would submit decisions for which it did not want to be solely responsible (such as a sentence of death) to a board of delegates for ratification.

The practised Coleman thus produced an organization that was perfect, after its fashion. Any discussion or controversy about proposed action took place in the secrecy of the executive committee room; any decision was unanimous and final; any action was implemented instantly by an armed force sworn to obey. Dissension was thereby eliminated, and opponents of the committee were confronted not by a body of ordinary men, with their disparate personal interests, their various private weaknesses, and their individual emotions or sympathies, but by a terrible machine—or so it seemed to those who tried to buck it.

William T. Coleman and his like-minded associates had not created this formidable and frightening organization just to hang Casey, though this fiction was current at the time and persisted through many subsequent accounts and recollections. That this was not the purpose of the committee was demonstrated on Friday, May 16, when Governor Johnson and General (of the almost non-existent state militia) William T. Sherman called on the committee and attempted to persuade Coleman to desist in his preparations in exchange for the promise of a swift and impartial trial of Casey. The "Law and Order" men seem to have heard in some polite and conciliatory evasions what they hoped to hear but the committee went right ahead gathering a force powerful enough to overawe any possible combination that could have been brought against it within the space of *months.*

By Saturday the committee had five thousand citizens organized into companies and was fortifying its headquarters. On Sunday, two thousand vigilance infantry marched silently to the county jail, placed a cannon opposite the entrance, and demanded the surrender of Casey. Sheriff Scannel (rumored to have paid $100,000 for his post) eyed the assorted street-brawlers that made up his command, sighed, wept a bit, and gave up his fellow volunteer fireman to all-too-certain justice. While they were at it, the vigilantes took Charles Cora, the still unconvicted murderer of Marshal Richardson.

The only hope left for the civil authorities was that James King of William, lingering near death, might survive. That was a slim hope indeed, for although his wound was not of a necessarily fatal variety, he had a score of the city's

Stalwart defenders of life and property, these vigilance "sharpshooters" commemorated their proud involvement in this unusual ambrotype.

Judge David Terry's bowie-knife assault on Vigilance Officer Hopkins gave the committee a prisoner it could neither release nor punish.

best physicians attending him—a circumstance which, given the state of the medical art, was (as H. H. Bancroft put it) "surely enough to kill any man though he had not first been shot." King did die, on Tuesday. Casey and Cora received a prompt, fair, and secret trial, and on Thursday, May 22, as the funeral cortege of the martyred editor wound toward Lone Mountain, the ballot box stuffer and the gambler were hanged outside the vigilance headquarters.

The showmanship with which the seizure and execution of Casey and Cora was conducted was of more importance to the guiding spirits of the vigilance committee than was the disposal of two killers. No one could have known better than Coleman that hanging a few thugs and running some others out of the country was not going to "clean out" a system of entrenched political corruption with which acts of violence were inevitably, but only casually, associated. It was important that Casey was a political crook; it was important that Cora was a gambler; and above all it was important that the committee make its awesome show of power, and to show this power (as it did) in a manner so measured and restrained as to suggest that vigilance had hardly flexed its muscle.

It is entirely probable that Coleman realized from the first that the deep-rooted corruption of San Francisco politics was more a function of popular psychology than of individual depravity. In this sense, exposure of the evils which beset the community was more important than summary punishment of ballot box stuffers. One might say that King had "exposed" corruption—but exposure by the committee was quite a different matter from exposure by an editor. King or any other possible "crusading" editor was necessarily limited in his capacity for investigation, since even the wealthiest and most influential dailies of the time supported an editorial staff worthy of a modern neighborhood shopping news. The committee had both the means to investigate and the might to punish. Operating as both grand jury and criminal court, its pronouncements and actions were undiluted by the erratic pace and attendant arguments of the usual legal process. The committee had unlimited jurisdiction and powers, so when it spoke the populace listened; there was not likely to be widespread opposition. The possible fate of honest opponents of the committee was demonstrated within a day of its organization: The *Herald*, alone among the daily newspapers, had made the error of editorializing against a revival of vigilance. When the merchants on the committee merely suggested that *all* merchants might do well to advertise elsewhere, the *Herald*, the wealthiest and most respected journal in town, was ruined.

The major portion of the "work" of the vigilance committee—the pursuit, arrest, interrogation, trial, and deportation of a score of the most notorious political scoundrels, and the revelation to the public of the details of the art of ballot box stuffing—took about a month. It has been suggested that but for the unfortunate encounter with Supreme Court Justice Terry on the evening of June 21, the committee might have adjourned at about this time. Such is unlikely. The massive military organization of the committee, though it might theoretically be adjourned *sine die* (as was the committee of 1851), had to be disbanded for all practical purposes once the decision was made to abdicate total civil power, and the committee could not afford to do this so long as there was the slightest show of opposition, or even the strong possibility of opposition developing. A month after the formation of the committee, there was still a potentially active "Law and Order" party, however baffled and disorganized, and there was the possibility that the deported criminals (and those who had fled on their own account) might flaunt the authority of an unarmed vigilance by returning to the city immediately. But whatever questions might have developed within the organization as to the appropriate moment to disband their expensive and time-consuming duties were prematurely resolved by the acquisition of a prisoner whom they could not convict and could not release.

At the time of the formation of the Committee of Vigilance, the influential citizens of San Francisco and central California fell into four general camps: (1) those who joined the committee (a large number); (2) those who supported the committee but did not wish to be personally involved (an even larger number); (3) those who sympathized with the goals of the committee but hoped that it would go away in a few days (a distinct minority); and (4) those who felt that the outrage against legal government implicit in the formation of vigilance outweighed any good that it might

Continued on page 60

Sacramento Street in the city of gold, where fraud and fortunes flourished and men gathered to preserve law, order, and enterprise.

XUM

THE AMOROUS SENATOR

The Scandalous Life of a Lop-Eared Burro

BY GENE FOWLER

THE SENATOR was the finest animal I ever owned. He was sturdy of back and strong of will. Occasionally he seemed sullen with captivity — I think an enforced celibacy weighed on his mind — but withal, the Senator was an effervescent fellow, unbroken in spirit and possessed of a flair for life.

The Senator was a mouse-colored burro, with one lop-ear which lent his port side a docile quality, entirely misleading, if not actually libelous. The other great ear stood like a member of the Coldstream Guards, forever hearkening to some oracular summons inaudible to humans. I am sure he was clairvoyant, for he could foretell a rattlesnake half a mile away. No doubt he had stemmed from Balaam's beast.

At sunrise, the Senator was as loquacious as any chanticleer, and he sang the dawn in terms of the soul undaunted. Most critics eschew the brayings of a burro, holding that the bestial *bel canto* is unmusical, quite, as the cascading hee-haws roll through glens where the quivering aspens dance in a west wind. But when the Senator cut loose with stentorian treble, I swear there was launched a commanding voice that would have won him top billing at the Metropolitan — at La Scala of Milan, even — had he deigned to become civilized, to bow, to scrape, to barter the brave pleasures of the wilderness for the perfumed ateliers of Park Avenue, his high mountain trail for a penthouse and a salon of dyspeptic fawners. He performed vocally in the Chinese scale of quarter notes, this Bing Crosby of the crags.

Somehow, it seemed the Senator was reborn each morning. By noon he had attained a sort of middle age, and forthwith began to act rather foolishly and sophomoric. It was hard to curb him from a beckoning mesa, where trollop-eyed Jennies were waiting like spiders for just such a blade as the Senator.

Then, at nightfall — his one upright ear giving him a unicorn profile against the moon — the Senator seemed to be smelling Death. But he did not cringe. He stood statuesquely

GENE FOWLER ONCE SAID, "I now know that a man who dares laugh or pursues his own simplicities is bound to be kicked to death, but this does not deter me." It never did. Newspaperman, novelist, biographer, playwright, screenwriter, philosopher, and poet, Fowler saw life large and wrote it large, using the language with the same vigor and whole-souled enthusiasm with which he conducted his life, public and private. At the time of his death in the summer of 1960, his place in the pantheon of American letters was unquestioned.

His most significant work was accomplished in the environs of Hollywood and New York, but he was a product of the mountain West. Indeed, Ring Lardner claimed that he "never left the plains or the prairies or the mountains." Fowler memorialized this heritage, one way or another, in most of the thirteen books he wrote, but never more pungently than in *Timber Line* (artfully disguised as a biography of Bonfils and Tammen, proprietors of the old *Denver Post*).

THE AMERICAN WEST offers this excerpt from *Timber Line* as the only kind of tribute Fowler would have relished: a remembrance of a time and a people long past. For many, the reading will renew an old and valued acquaintance; for those so unfortunate as to be strangers to his work, it is hoped that this introduction will serve to fire their appetites for more. To that purpose, we have appended to the story a detailed bibliographic note, which lists and describes the major titles in Fowler's literary lexicon.

and would have presented a kingly mien, were it not for the pendulous ear. This blemish robbed him of majesty, and perhaps imbued a twilight tinge of inferiority. Artists unwittingly have revealed this quality in crippled rulers by their very effort to gloss over deformity, emphasizing, rather than concealing in stone or canvas, the regal funks.

Thus, the boomerangs of flattery so frequently have resulted in nonpayment of royal bills, imprisonment in dungeons, market-place flagellations, disgrace and banishment. All of which does not prove that monarchs are stupidly ungrateful; rather, it defines the artist as a traitor to his craft whenever he counterfeits a rose where the wart or wen has priority.

I, too, endeavored to correct a noble infirmity, the Senator's auricular lassitude, by application of birch-splints. He roundly booted me into a cold and shallow creek for my pains. The Senator wanted no pity, and of pity he gave none.

A gentleman, and my first tutor.

He stood still enough — outwardly — as the night stars came, but his hackamore was askew with straining, his tether-rope taut with yearning.

The Senator had legs of the Queen Anne period of furniture, and his feet were as dainty as Cinderella's — albeit more lethal. He had porphyry eyes that looked wistfully toward the far mesa, where the wild burros herded. When distant throatings of the wanton Jennies rode the wind with nymph-like invitations, the Senator would mumble love ditties. His body was Prometheus; his soul, Orpheus.

I did not quite understand him . . . then.

I was nine years old when I assumed ownership of the Senator. I believe he was six or upwards; but no one knew for certain — nor cared, either, since the day the Senator almost amputated the exploring hand of Tom Aldrich, who had said such matters could be determined beyond dispute by an examination of equine teeth.

Aside from a dose of the Senator's

Illustrations by Glen Rounds

heels the time I played plastic surgeon on his flaccid ear, he and I got along together. The Senator had served in Axel Carr's small pack-train, carrying crates of dynamite from Empire, thirty miles away, to Red Mountain. He was named in honor of Senator ("Silver Dollar") Tabor, who had grubstaked Carr, as well as my grandpa and a hundred other prospectors in Leadville days. During a laborious era of powder-toting, the Senator had *two* upright ears, and had sampled the joys of fatherhood.

One autumn evening Carr's cabin went to Heaven with a grand roar, and Carr with it. Fragments of Carr were found every few minutes after the mysterious detonation — a leg, as I recall it, being the largest recoverable part of the confetti-like decedent. It was hanging, in a weird yuletide fashion, from the top branch of a Douglas fir tree.

The Senator had escaped whole — but his left ear had been slapped down by the blast — and I took him over in fee simple.

How glad the days! How sweet the smell of the pines, and how caressing the wind against the smooth cheeks of nine! We would ride along the old Mormon Road, where Brigham Young, Joseph Smith, and other whiskered saints had trod during the long-ago pilgrimage to their Utah Canaan. I would sit astride the Senator — well back on his maltese rump — a Sir Launcelot, listening to the Merlin-tones of the great winds. There were voices, prophecies, soothsayings that only a child might understand — men have forfeited the right to dwell in enchanted places.

And often I looked at timber line, some three thousand feet above our remote valley. Timber line, above which no trees grow. From a distance, timber line is a strangely level hedge. The peaks rise badly, a congregation of tonsured monks. Red Mountain was a fat, jovial fellow with a pink sandstone pate — a Franz Hals' portrait, a Falstaff of the range. To the east of Red Mountain lay the mesa, where the bawdy Jennies kicked up their heels at convention and domesticity.

At timber line, once you are there, a measureless rug of white sheep's wool quite frequently is spread beneath your feet. There you will find your hedge greatly changed. The trees are gnarled, stunted, rheumatic. There the whirlwinds have their home. And you come to feel that timber line is symbolic of something, a barrier
perhaps — you never quite
know what it means, but you sense
that timber line is a frontier, where
the work of man leaves off and that of God begins.

Seldom is there foliage on the storm-facing bosoms of the strained, tenacious old trees that have breasted a century or more of prevailing winds. The mountain-tops have a climate entirely their own, seasons exclusively their own, and weather as fickle as the vows of diplomats. If you scale a peak crowned by an acre or so of tableland, you will encounter amazing paradoxes. You have climbed through a violence of upthrusting winds — mostly from the east — which have endeavored to hurl you from crag to ravine; then suddenly you win the flat summit and stand in an area so calm as to be uncanny. The nearby gale, mounting a corkscrew to heaven, rockets past your peak to wrestle with the stars. And it is a vastly impressive experience to stand in the calm zone, hearing the unruly cry of the great wind, and with never a whisper of it straying through your young hair. At timber line you become Olympian.

There are times, too, above timber line, when an electric storm actually touches you, and it is not at all dangerous — I have no scientific basis for saying so — even though your young hair stands on end, and sparks pop from your fingertips when you flex your knuckles. You are shaking hands with Jove himself, and a very merry fellow he is up there.

And again, to be above timber line, when tarnished clouds are spilling snow on cabins thousands of feet below — but above and about you there is no snow! Only the sunlight, and here and there a peak, rising island-like, from the cloud-sea. All these are wonderful things. But they belong to a past, to boyhood, and I believe I was talking about the Senator.

Where are his grandly lecherous bones today?

The Senator waited one noon for Grandma to hang out the sugarsack of dishcloths; and he promptly ate them, gobbling every one of them with gargantuan optimism. This gluttony was an overt act. It was my first intimation that Fate does not travel a direct and simple route, but moves along oblique lines. An assassin kills a prince in a provincial town, and a world war is born. A burro eats Grandma's dishcloths, and . . . well, the old lady was a person of dominance and occasional choler.

"The burro must go," she said; "he's destructive."

The fabric-sated Senator now was braying in delirious crescendo, his great trowel of an ear cocked toward the mesa.

"I never liked him anyway," Grandma said; "he's shameless."

Grandpa had had another futile day of blasting the granite hill for gold. (He had had twelve years of futile days — but was there not always a Tomorrow?)

Grandpa was busy, putting half-a-dozen yellow sticks of dynamite into the oven, to dry the powder for next day's salvos. "You might of known better'n hang anything near that jackass," Grandpa said. "How was he to know?"

"*Must* you put that dynamite in the oven?" Grandma asked. "It drives me crazy."

"Keep your shirt on," Grandpa said, "I know my business."

These good folk were a bit critical of each other. It seems that General Lew Wallace, when Governor of New Mexico, had consulted Grandma in a literary way. He had given her a warmly-autographed copy of *Ben Hur*. Since that time, Grandma and Grandpa had been a bit critical of each other. Heigho!

Grandpa was handling the sticks like a farmer placing eggs in an incubator. "There's not the slightest danger. We die when our time comes."

"That's what Axel Carr thought," Grandma said. "It's tempting Providence. Anyway, get rid of that burro. What good is he?"

I lay in my bunk, listening. I heard the Senator braying right lustily. I heard Grandma pronounce his doom. I heard Grandpa grunt and go out to drive the Senator away, like a grim father giving the gate to an erring son. I did not cry when he turned the Senator loose upon a wide world. But I did hope the log cabin would blow up, like Carr's, myself with it. I planned to slip from my bunk and set off the powder in the oven. I waited a while for it to go off of its own accord. Then it was too late, for Grandpa returned, grumbling, took the powder from the oven and laid it aside for the next of his countless Tomorrows.

"Women are a problem," he was saying to himself.

For a week thereafter I wandered the Mormon Road afoot. It was small fun. I fashioned spears from lodge-pole pine. I roamed the groves, hurling javelins at chipmunks, pretending they were Saracens. But the joys of crusading were ephemeral. I kept asking Grandpa if he had run across the Senator, during the trips up and down the trail.

One evening in late spring, Grandpa said: "I seen the Senator today. He was on the mesa with the other Jacks and Jennies."

"How did he look? Homesick?"

Grandpa stuck a stout hand into his beard. An hour-glass stream of ore dust spilled from his pancake hat. "Depends on what you call homesick. I dunno. Come with me tomorrow. I think I'm nearing a lode."

I went to bed, but couldn't sleep. Just to see the Senator would be something. Maybe . . . but it's hard to dream when an argument is in progress near one's bed. Near one's soul. Grandma and Grandpa were having a few words in regard to a pan of Grandpa's personal sourdough, from which he made his own biscuits. Somebody had thrown it away. It was a breed of pastry second to none, in the opinion of this gritty old citizen of the hills. I fell asleep during these log-cabin recriminations. I remember vaguely having heard a reference to General Wallace's amateur standing as a biscuit connoisseur.

"Just leave his name out of it," Grandma was saying. "The General had background."

Next morning we went toward the claim. "I'm likely to get into the vein today," Grandpa said. "We'll be richer'n all hell, and you can have a pony. A dozen ponies."

We finally reached the mesa. In the distance were about forty burros of various conformations. Some were grazing, others immobile, their ears vaned toward us querulously. Standing guard, a Lucifer of pride and apparently monarch of the whole herd, was the Senator. Beside him was the most dissipated, flea-bitten Jenny I ever had seen, frisking and cavorting like any old scut.

I ran with all speed, stumbling over boulders, but never slackening. Grandpa was howling: "You got no rope! You got to have a rope."

The Senator appraised me rather coldly, in the manner of a friend to whom you have lent money. "Senator!" I called. "Senator!"

I don't think titles meant much to him. He turned philosophically; then, with a most obscene gesture, lifted his heels, snorted and galloped swiftly off, the herd following him like sycophants. I felt whittled-down. I could sense, even at nine, that the Senator's affections were not for me, but with that unwholesome Jenny—that Moll Flanders of the mesa—whose sly countenance haunts me even to my forty-third year. God, what a strumpet!

I limped back to Grandpa. "Won't he ever come home?"

The old man lifted his pack. "I guess not, son. And I guess you're too young to take telling. But when you grow up, remember what I say: don't ever expect anything that's in love to listen to reason."

I've often wondered if Love killed the Senator, or if the Senator killed Love. &

Only two of Gene Fowler's books are still in print: *Timber Line* (Doubleday, 1956) and *Skyline: A Reporter's Reminiscences of the '20's* (Viking, 1961). There are no paperback editions available. (Publishers, please take note. . . .)

Beyond question, Fowler's strong suit was biography, for he knew the men about whom he wrote: John Barrymore *(Good Night, Sweet Prince,* Viking, 1955), Jimmy Walker *(Beau James,* Viking, 1949). William G. Fallon *(The Great Mouthpiece,* Covici-Friede, 1931), Mack Sennett *(Father Goose,* Covici-Friede, 1934), and Jimmy Durante *(Schnozzola,* Viking, 1951).

Three of his novels are worth the attention of anyone interested in a properly vigorous English sentence: *Trumpet in the Dust* (World, 1930), *Shoe the Wild Mare* (Liveright, 1931), and *Salute to Yesterday* (Random House, 1937); and *Illusion in Java* (Random House, 1939) has been long recognized as a classic in the art of the novel. Fowler as poet can be seen in *The Jervis Bay Goes Down* (Random House, 1937).

The most purely reminiscent of Fowler's nonfiction books (aside from *Skyline)* is *A Solo in Tom-Toms* (Viking, 1946) in which he recalls his boyhood and youth in Denver and the mountains of Colorado. It should be familiar to anyone who professes an affection for the memory of those who populated the West-that-was.

The legend of Gene Fowler, as fondly recounted time and again by such former members of the Fourth Estate as Lucius Beebe, Ben Hecht, and H. Allen Smith, was probably closer to the real man than most such legends are—a theory well supported by Will Fowler's *The Young Man From Denver* (Doubleday, 1962). It is fitting that this biography of Fowler by his son possesses the same qualities of compassion, humor and insight that marked so many of his own books.

XUM

PUG-NOSED LIL AND THE GIRL WITH THE BLUE VELVET BAND

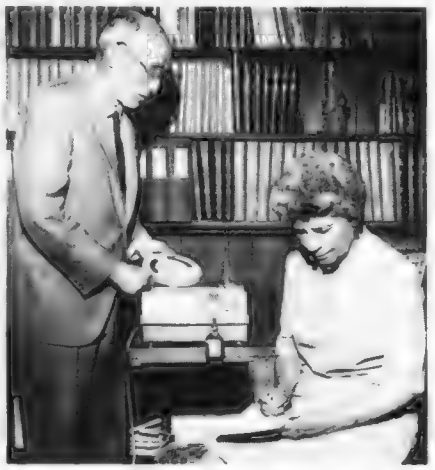
A Brief Medley of Women in Western Songs

BY AUSTIN AND ALTA FIFE

Women were scarce on the western frontier, at least before homesteads were taken up and permanent settlements established. Explorers, trappers, buffalo hunters, and prospectors, who came typically to make a "fast buck" and intended to return to the States, simply couldn't be encumbered with gentle specimens of the fairer sex or their immature offspring. Still, the law of supply and demand operated: women's value was enhanced by their absence. Man's stark dependency on woman was manifest by tribute paid to the few hardy females who got there first—the camp followers and other women of easy virtue who managed to make a dramatic early appearance wherever a mining town, permanent army post, railroad junction, or seaport came into being.

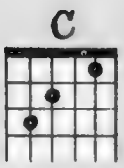
This does not mean that the westerner's traditional esteem for "respectable" women went out the window. Quite the contrary, they were exalted even more. Mother, sister, sweetheart, and wife survived in the frontiersman's memory purified of all imperfections. A cult of ideal womanhood emerged about them which harkens to the age of chivalry and the cult of a Madonna with Babe in arms.

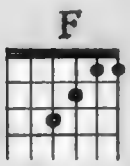
When mother, sister, sweetheart, or wife did arrive, and when western towns got the stamp of permanence, normative forces pushed the women of easy virtue into hiding or oblivion. This transformation was visible in a visit I made to Oklahoma in 1959, while I was wrangling cowboy songs on a Guggenheim fellowship. I had read that in the '80s an Oklahoma governor had had a bust of the notorious Belle Starr erected in Ponca City. I combed the city in vain: no such statue was found. When I asked the desk clerk at police headquarters, he was puzzled at first. Then an illumination struck him. "Oh! You mean the Pioneer Woman!" Belle's statue had been replaced by one of a prim and proper young woman, her dress high-necked and ankle-long. She clasped a Bible to her bosom and had a knee-britched and well-scrubbed boy in tow. A virile frontier institution had been sacrificed, but let us preserve at least its myth! Who knows? There may yet come a day when bards shall sing not of Sir Galahad and the quest for the Holy Grail, but of "Cowboy" Fife and his search for the bust of Belle Starr! —A.F.



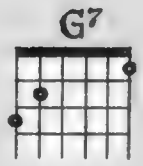
Austin *and* **Alta Fife** *have done research in the folklore of the West since the 1930s, compiling some fifty volumes of field notes. Their books include:* A New Anthology of Cowboy and Western Songs *(1969);* Songs of the Cowboys *(1966); and* Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore among the Mormons *(1956); and they have prepared a major collection of folk and primitive poetry soon to be issued by the American West Publishing Company.*

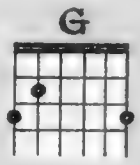
NO USE FOR THE WOMEN

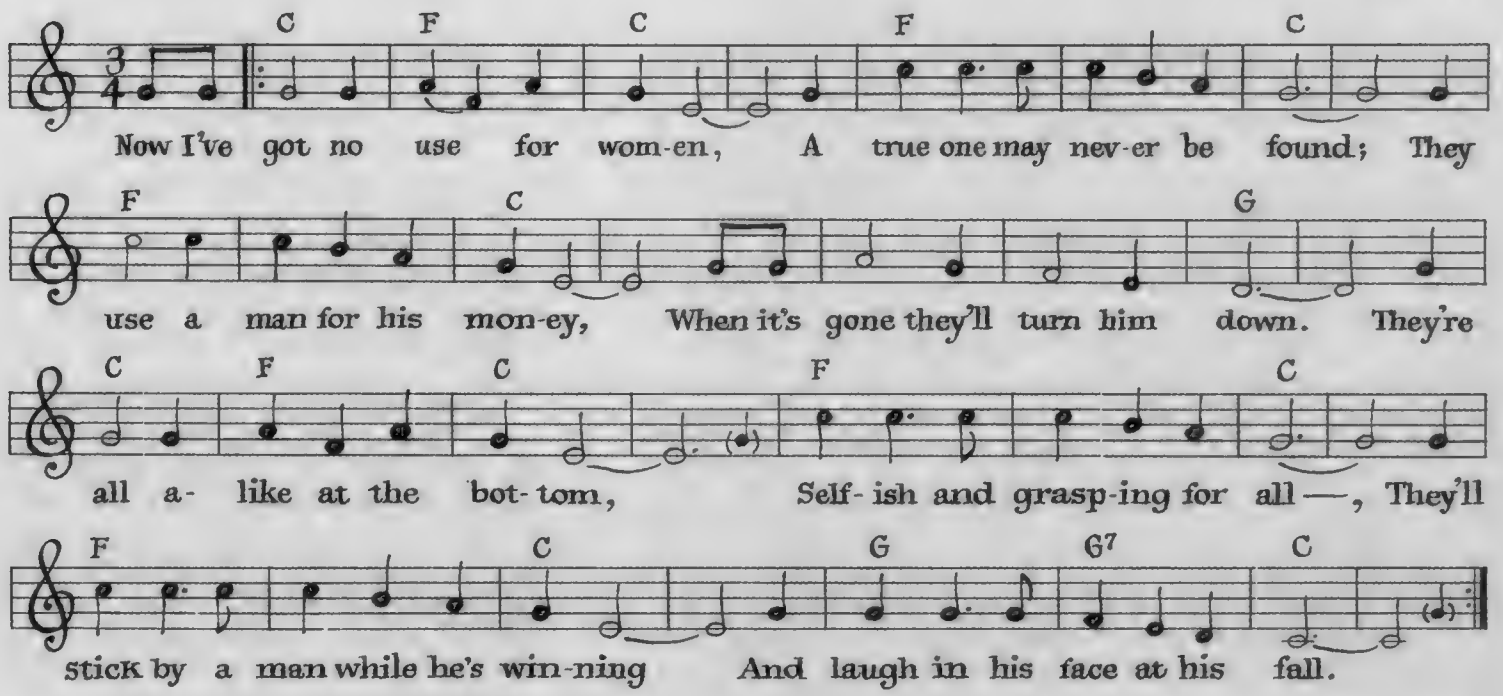




We have collected many texts of this song, but unlike most western folk songs, there is little variation. It is as though the original song managed to say precisely what was to be said—nothing superfluous, nothing missing. In it the thesis of the treachery of women is stated, one gripping example thereof is cited, the tragic results are given, and the cowboy's scorn is restated with magnified intensity. The whole tragedy rests on an insult to the picture of the girl worshipped by the cowboy, her brash perfidy notwithstanding! (Text from Stella Hendren, melody from Marlin Bingham: Idaho, 1958.)






C F C F C
Now I've got no use for wom-en, A true one may nev-er be found; They
F C G
use a man for his mon-ey, When it's gone they'll turn him down. They're
C F C F C
all a- like at the bot- tom, Self- ish and grasp-ing for all —, They'll
F C G G7 C
stick by a man while he's win-ning And laugh in his face at his fall.

Now I've got no use for women,
A true one may never be found;
They use a man for his money,
When it's gone they'll turn him down.
They're all alike at the bottom,
Selfish and grasping for all;
They'll stick by a man while he's winning
And laugh in his face at his fall.

My pal was an honest young puncher,
Honest, upright, and true;
But he turned to a hard-shooting gunman
On account of a girl named Lou.
He fell in with evil companions,
The kind that are better off dead;
When a gambler insulted her picture,
He filled him full of lead.

All through the long night they trailed him,
Through mesquite and thick chaparral;
And I couldn't help think of the woman,
As I saw him pitch and fall.
If she'd been the pal that she should have,
He might have been raising a son,
Instead of out there on the prairie,
To die by the ranger's gun.

Death's sharp sting did not trouble,
His chances for life were too slim;
But where they were putting his body
Was all that worried him.
He lifted his head on his elbow;
The blood from his wounds flowed red;
He gazed at his pals grouped around him,
As he whispered to them and said:

"Oh, bury me out on the prairie,
Where the coyotes may howl o'er my grave;
Bury me out on the prairie,
But from them my bones please save.
Wrap me up in a blanket
And bury me deep in the ground,
Cover me over with boulders
Of granite, gray and round."

So we buried him out on the prairie,
Where the coyotes can howl o'er his grave;
And his soul is now a-resting
From the unkind cut she gave.
And many another young puncher
As he rides past that pile of stones,
Recalls some similar woman
And envies his mouldering bones.

The ladies, the ladies. . . . In the environs of the frontier West—particularly in its scattered urban pockets—ladies of the night far outnumbered ladies of refinement. As in most of everything else, San Francisco led the trans-Mississippi West in the prostitution sweepstakes, and the **California Police Gazette,** a superbly crude imitation of the **National Police Gazette,** took great relish in reporting, complete with woodcuts, the antics of the city's feminine netherworld. Above is a scene in one of many "waiter-girl saloons." Below, a couple of disgruntled male customers tear up "Madame Reiter's" bordello on Sacramento Street, displaying something less than a proper degree of chivalry.

BELLE STARR.
QUEEN OF THE DESPERADOES

This rough-hewn ballad has a central theme which harkens back to the thirteenth century, when woman was indeed queen and the highest ideal of an errant knight was but to do her bidding. Belle Starr was certainly no Lady Gwendolyn, but frontiersmen behaved as if she were. What a pity that no melody has been found. Can a reader perhaps help us? (Text from the Pacific Northwest Farm Quad: Washington, 1961.)

She was a two-gun woman:
Miss Belle Shirley was her name.
The Lone Star State of Texas
Was where she won her fame.

Oh, I was a puncher in an old slouch hat,
But I couldn't make any money at that;
So I said: "Belle, let me join your show,
An' if it gets too hot, I'll ride to Old Mexico,
I'll ride to Old Mexico-o-o."

Jim Reed was her first lover,
And she eloped with him one night,
Whilst her dad chased her clear across Texas,
Trying to stage a fight.

When Jim Reed was drilled by Morris,
Belle, she took to the trail
And started a life of wandering
That everyone knew would fail.

When Belle, she married Mr. Starr,
She moved to Younger's Bend
And lived on Canadian River
Until the very end.

Belle fell from under her steed one day;
The traitor Watson was the cause;
But both of them was guilty, like the rest of us,
Of breaking the territory's laws.

Oh, come, cowhand and herder,
Every gambler, prospector, and bum;
Don't tinker with gun-totin' ladies
Or drink too much niggerhead rum.

For Belle was a beautiful tough one,
And she led all her gang to the grave;
But while they were up and kickin'
Each one of them was her slave.

PUG-NOSED LIL

Here we have the *genre burlesque* at its very best. The stereotypes, clichés, conventional images, and dramatic events of frontier life are assembled and ordered with amazing skill, thus producing a rare comic effect. Complex poetic structures reinforce the exuberant good humor of the poem. The author is Robert H. Fletcher (*Corral Dust: Western Verse*. Helena, Montana, 1936; pp. 70–73).

In Rattlesnake Gulch of the Skihootch Range
  Dwelt a miner, Cockeyed Bill,
And his little gal was his only pal,
  She was knowed as Pug-Nosed Lil.
In a cabin neat he had sought retreat
  Where he sheltered her from ills,
While he strove and toiled and delved and moiled
  For the gold in them thar hills.

She may not have been so long on looks
  And her chest was a trifle flat,
But she never played faro and she shunned mascaro
  And rouge and the likes of that,
While Bill was a man with a rough hewed pan
  Who at times could be plumb tough.
You can bet this cinch that in any pinch
  They were diamonds in the rough.

On Alkali Creek just across the ridge
  Where the meadowlarks sing sweet,
Lived a young cowpoke with a heart of oak
  Who was knowed as Roundup Pete.
With a passion pure he could scarce endure
  His heart beat 'neath his vest,
For he loved Lil true as the he-men do
  In the great wide open West.

Up Spotted Calf Trail over Freeze-out Flat
  He would ride on his paint cayuse
When his work was through just to court and woo
  By the side of a placer sluice.
Well, he stood ace high and was getting by
  With Bill and the pug-nosed wren
For they both opined he'd a good pure mind—
  One of nature's noblemen.

Now a snake in the grass lived at Hell Gate Pass—
  His soul was as black as tar.
It had been his aim to jump Bill's claim
  On the El Dorado Bar.
He had planned, the skunk, that when Bill got drunk,
  As sometimes a miner does,
He would steal the skirt and would do her dirt
  Like the villainous fiend he wuz.

Old Bill got canned, as the slicker planned,
  Down at Shorty's Sample Bar,
Where a lot of ginks let him buy them drinks
  Or a good five cent cigar.
And the villain sneered and he kind of leered
  In a most offensive style
Till he made a crack and Bill came back,
  "When you say that, stranger, smile!"

With Bill in his cups, why, the varmint ups
  And heads out to grab Bill's kid.
He was on the prowl for to do as foul
  A deed as ever was did!
Well, he found the frail waiting by the trail
  That goes to Chimney Butte.
She was lorn and sad for her cockeyed Dad
  For she loved the old galoot.

Cantankerous Nash with the dyed mustache,
  For that was the rascal's name,
Advanced on the maid who was pale and afraid
  And aware now of his game.
To this ornery guy with the shifty eye
  She uttered her favorite line,
"You low down slicker, your breath smells of likker,
  And your lips shall NOT touch mine!"

Now men were men in those old days when
  This circumstance occurred,
And Pete, of course, on his wonder horse
  Had left the thundering herd
For old Bill's shack just to get a snack
  Of the grub like Lily could cook,
When his eye so keen lit upon the scene
  Where Lil fought off the crook.

Down the mountain trail Pete rolled his tail
  To rescue the fair young wren
While the villain cursed till he almost burst
  For the skunk was foiled again.
Pete loudly cried as he reached her side,
  "Leave her be, you dastard rat!"
This Pete was a gent and what he meant
  Was a different word than that.

Nash loosed all holts and he pulled his Colts
  To plug Pete on the spot,
But like a flash Pete socked this Nash
  With a right cross that was hot.
They went to a clinch that was no soft cinch,
  It was a root-hog, win, or bust,
And the canyon rang with a bang! bang!! bang!!!
  And the scoundrel bit the dust.

Then Pete took Lil and they found old Bill
  And they looked up a nice J.P.
Who made the splice for a reasonable price,
  Now they're happy as can be.
And in Rattlesnake Gulch of the Skihootch Range
  There is peace and ca'm once more,
While the pale moon shineth and the woodbine twineth
  Round the old log cabin door.

THE GIRL WITH THE BLUE VELVET BAND

Steadfastness in love, even for an undeserving woman, is a convention in pioneer and western song and verse. Here the adorable temptress leads a young man of promise into a life of drug addiction and crime, then with a hardened criminal, contrives to betray this naive victim to the police. During a decade of imprisonment, notwithstanding, the victim's thoughts have lingered upon the lady's bewitching and deadly charms. (Text from the Robert W. Gordon Collection in the Library of Congress.)

In that city of wealth, beauty, and fashion,
Dear old Frisco, where I first saw the light;
And the many frolics I had there
Are fresh in my memory tonight.

One evening while out for a ramble,
Here or there without thought or design,
I chanced on a young girl tall and slender
At the corner of Kearney and Pine.

On her face was the first flush of nature,
And bright eyes seemed to expand;
While her hair fell in rich, brilliant masses,
Was entwined in a Blue Velvet Band.

To a house of gentle ruination
She invited me with a sweet smile;
She seemed so refined, gay, and charming
That I thought I would tarry a while.

She then shared with me a collection
Of wines of an excellent brand,
And conversed in politest of language,
The girl with the Blue Velvet Band.

After lunch, to a well-kept apartment
We repaired to the third floor above;
And I thought myself truly in Heaven
Where reigneth the Goddess of Love.

Her lady's taste was resplendent
From the graceful arrangement of things,
From the pictures that stood on the bureau
To a little bronze cupid with wings.

But what struck me the most was an object
Designed by an artistic hand,
'Twas the costly "lay-out" of a hop-fiend,
And that fiend was my Blue Velvet Band.

On a pile of soft robes and pillows
She reclined, I declare, on the floor;
Then we both hit the pipe and I slumbered;
I ponder it over and o'er.

'Tis months since the craven thing grasped me,
And in bliss did my life glide away;
From "opium' to "dipping" and thieving
She artfully led day by day.

One evening, coming home wet and weary,
With the swag from a jewelry store,
I heard the soft voice of my loved one
As I gently opened the door.

"If you'll give me a clue to convict him,"
Said a stranger, in tones soft and bland,
"You'll then prove to me that you love me."
"It's a go!" said my Blue Velvet Band.

Ah, how my heart filled with anger
At women, so fair, false, and vile,
And the thought that I once truly loved her
Brought to my lips a contemptible smile.

All ill-gotten gains we had squandered,
And my life was hers to command;
Betrayed and deserted for another—
Could this be my Blue Velvet Band?

Just a few minutes before I was hunted
By the cops, who wounded me, too,
And my temper was none of the sweetest
As I swung myself into their view.

And the copper, not liking the glitter
Of the "44" Colt in my hand,
Hurriedly left through the window,
Leaving me with my Blue Velvet Band.

What happened to me I will tell you:
I was "ditched" for a desperate crime;
There was hell in a bank about midnight,
And my pal was shot down in his prime.

As a convict of hard reputation,
Ten years of hard grind I did land;
And I often thought of the pleasures
I had with my Blue Velvet Band.

One night as bedtime was ringing,
I was standing close to the bars,
I fancied I heard a girl singing
Far out in the ocean of stars.

Her voice had the same touch of sadness
I knew that but one could command;
It had the same thrill of gladness
As that of my Blue Velvet Band.

Many months have passed since this happened,
And the story belongs to the past;
I forgave her, but just retribution
Claimed this fair but false one at last.

She slowly sank lower and lower,
Down through life's shifting sands,
'Till finally she died in a hop-joint,
This girl with the Blue Velvet Band.

If she had been true when I met her,
A bright future for us was in store,
For I was an able mechanic,
And honest and square to the core.

But as sages of old have contended,
What's decreed to us mortals must stand;
So a grave in a potter's field ended
My romance with the Blue Velvet Band.

Now when I get out I will hasten
Back to my home town again,
Where my chances are good for some dollars,
All the way from a thousand to ten.

And if I'm in luck I'll endeavor
To live honest in some other land,
And bid farewell to dear old Frisco,
And the grave of my Blue Velvet Band.

Typically, the **California Police Gazette's** reporting of the San Francisco earthquake of October, 1865, concentrated cheerfully on the plight of a well-known senator (center) who was inspired to flee a bordello clad in little more than his respectability.

God Bless Our

Aboard the Three-Masted Bark St. James, New York to San Francisco, 1900.

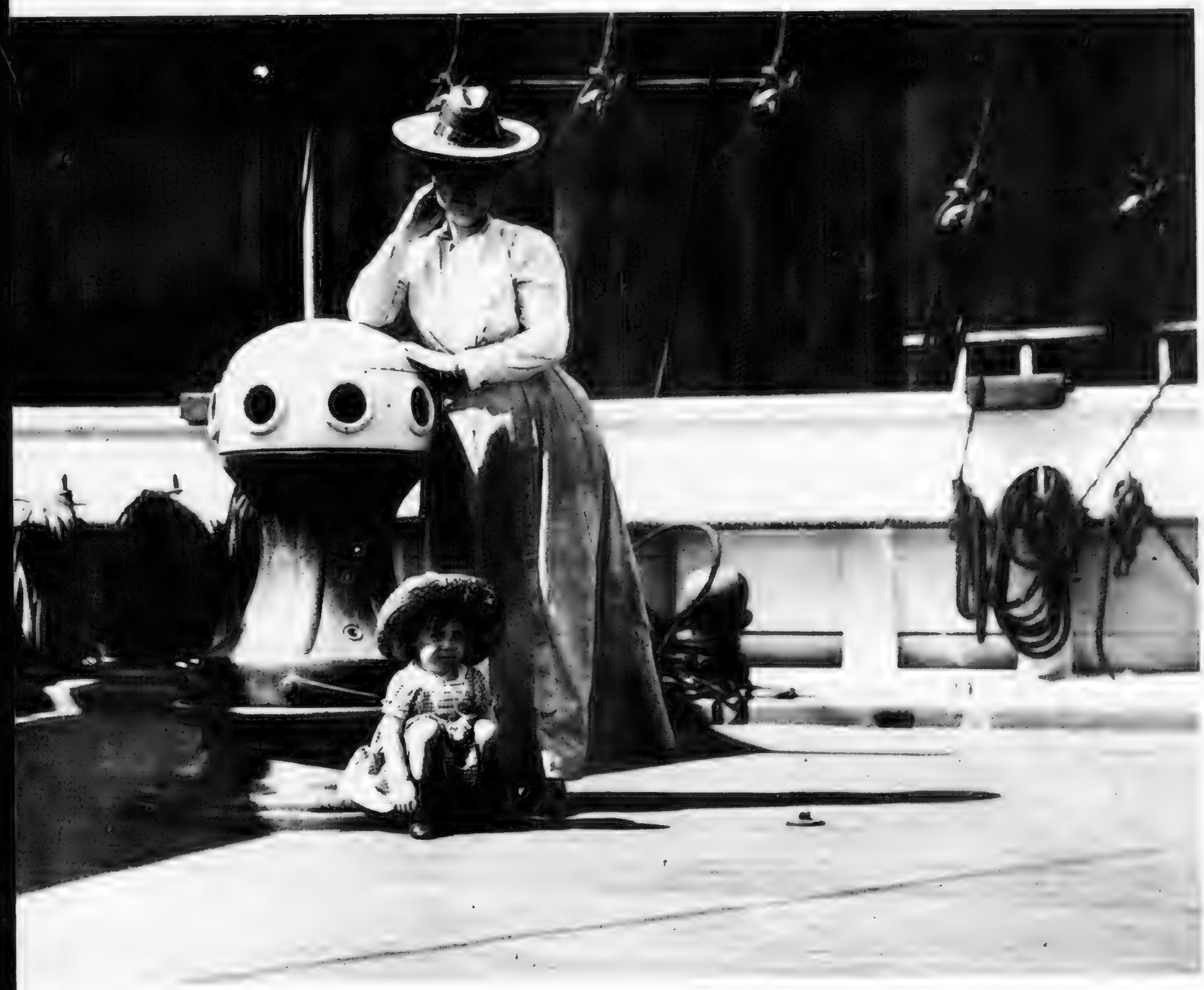
BY ROBERT A. WEINSTEIN

"I believe, if the captain is married and his wife is in good health, enjoys travel, and is not afraid of the water, it would be better she should accompany her husband on his voyages as one to whom he can always turn for companionship and confidence at sea. Woman's influence on shipboard, if she is a true, good woman, is felt for good throughout the ship. She has a refining influence, and the sailors guard their words and actions more in her presence, for no sailor, old or young, would pain her by thought or deed. The remark that I have heard so often, that a ship is no place for a woman, seems to my mind misapplied. . . ."

—Captain John D. Whidden,
Ocean Life in the Old Sailing Ship Days (Boston, 1908)

FROM THE DAYS OF the California Gold Rush until the years just before the First World War the long sea road from California and the Pacific Northwest to the ports of the eastern states and Europe was one of the world's great trade routes. The passage was by way of Cape Horn—a way for sailing ships—and the last great days of the Cape Horn trade were the last great days of the tall ships and of the hard-fisted shell-backs who traced their professional

Howdy Skip



With full sail set, the Old Man's missus poses at the standard compass.

ancestry back to the times and sea-trades that first broke man free of his land-bound home.

In the "general trades"—the long trades—of the late nineteenth century, the seaman was indeed an almost homeless wanderer. A straightforward voyage "out and back" (say, from New York to San Francisco and return) might consume nearly a year, while accidents of nature or of commerce might take a ship around the world, leaving her swinging at her anchor for months in distant ports, with months of flukey passage time between.

The lonely life of the seafarer was most acutely lonely to the master of the sailing ship, isolated by the protocol of command even from his officers. As a result, in the latter days of sail (when ships were large and crews were small), the ancient axiom that women were unlucky shipmates was breached, and it became far from unusual for the captain's wife and children to share the after cabin.

Photographs documenting domestic life at sea are relatively rare. The collection presented here—that of the family life of an American shipmaster, his young wife, and their

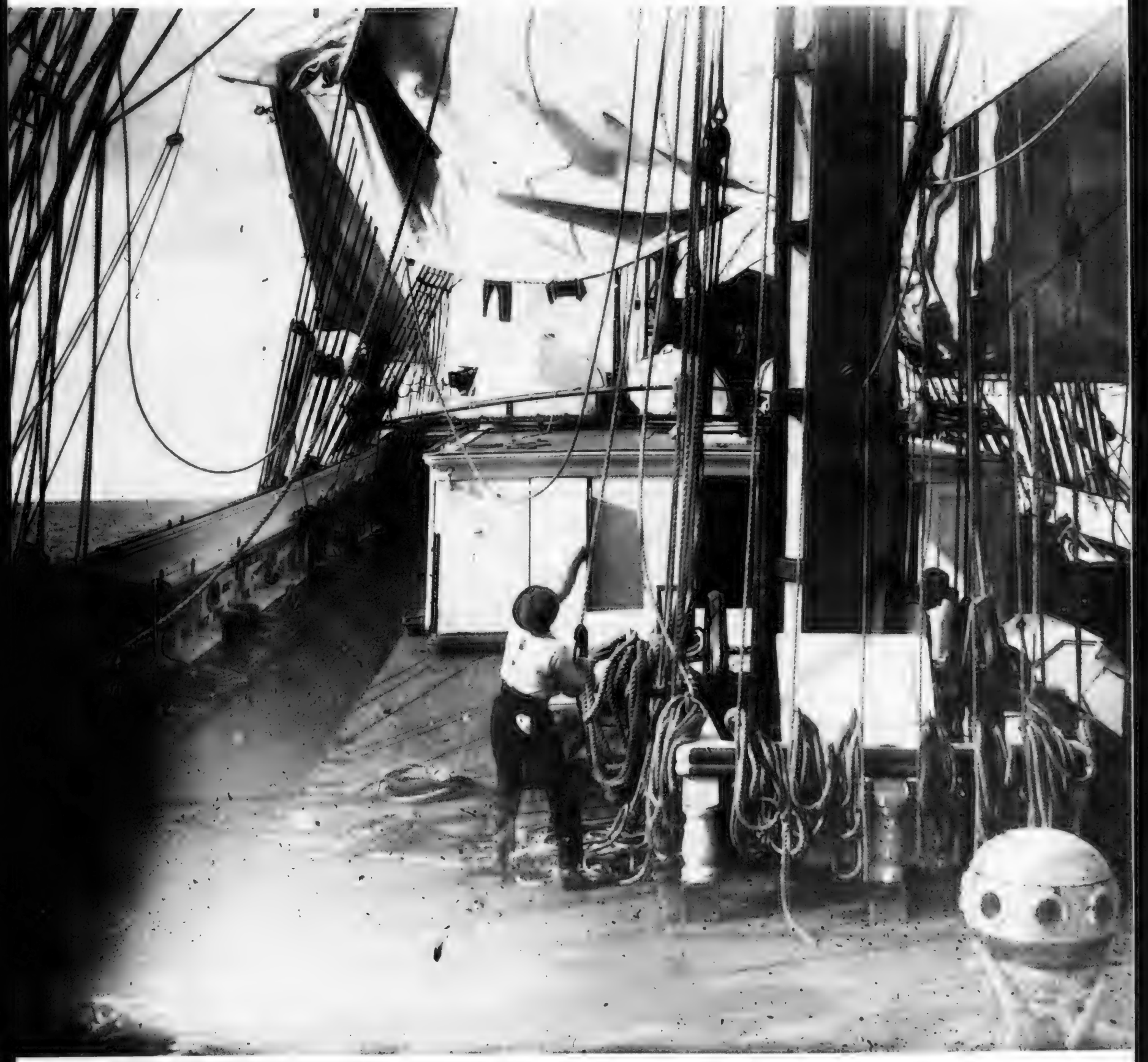
It could be that the old expression "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water" has some obscure and lubberly origin—but we like to think that it started as an order given by a seagoing Victorian mother to an unusually clumsy steward.

Wives and wicker chaise lounges were not unlikely ocean companions, and straw hats and carpet slippers suited a sailing ship master—but why anybody took a big hound dog to sea is a mystery of the deep. But it was done.

XUM

Time and ease for reading was often in scarce supply to a Cape Horn shipmaster or his mates. So a fair breeze and warm sun was no opportunity to be declined.

To the old tune of "Blow, good winds, blow . . . Hold, good spars, hold . . ." a brisk lyvolly tune around the cabin top kept the Tapleys fit in fair weather or foul.



Pull, pull, pull . . . and then pull a last few inches more: that was the way of it in sailing ships. With a calm sea and a light breeze the photographer could still find plenty of activity aboard, but it was just as apt to be pull, pull, pull in the dark of night in a howling gale off "Cape Stiff." Then the ship's men sought out each line in this seeming jungle of rope by feel—and then the camera was wedged tight away in the sideboard of the saloon, and the captain's brood was wedged tight away in the bunks below.

XUM

This is not an early lesson in the "A B C's" but baby Adelaide playing while Captain Tapley makes a new rack for the flags used to signal other ships at sea. School aboard ship was a standard routine for large seagoing families, though. In the case of the clan Florence, where there were four schoolaged children in the afterguard, the skipper taught the primary grades while his wife held advanced classes. At the right (above) the youngsters take a turn at celestial navigation, with the dubious assistance of Adelaide. Pillow is the kind of view that sea home photographer would give three rolls of film to catch.

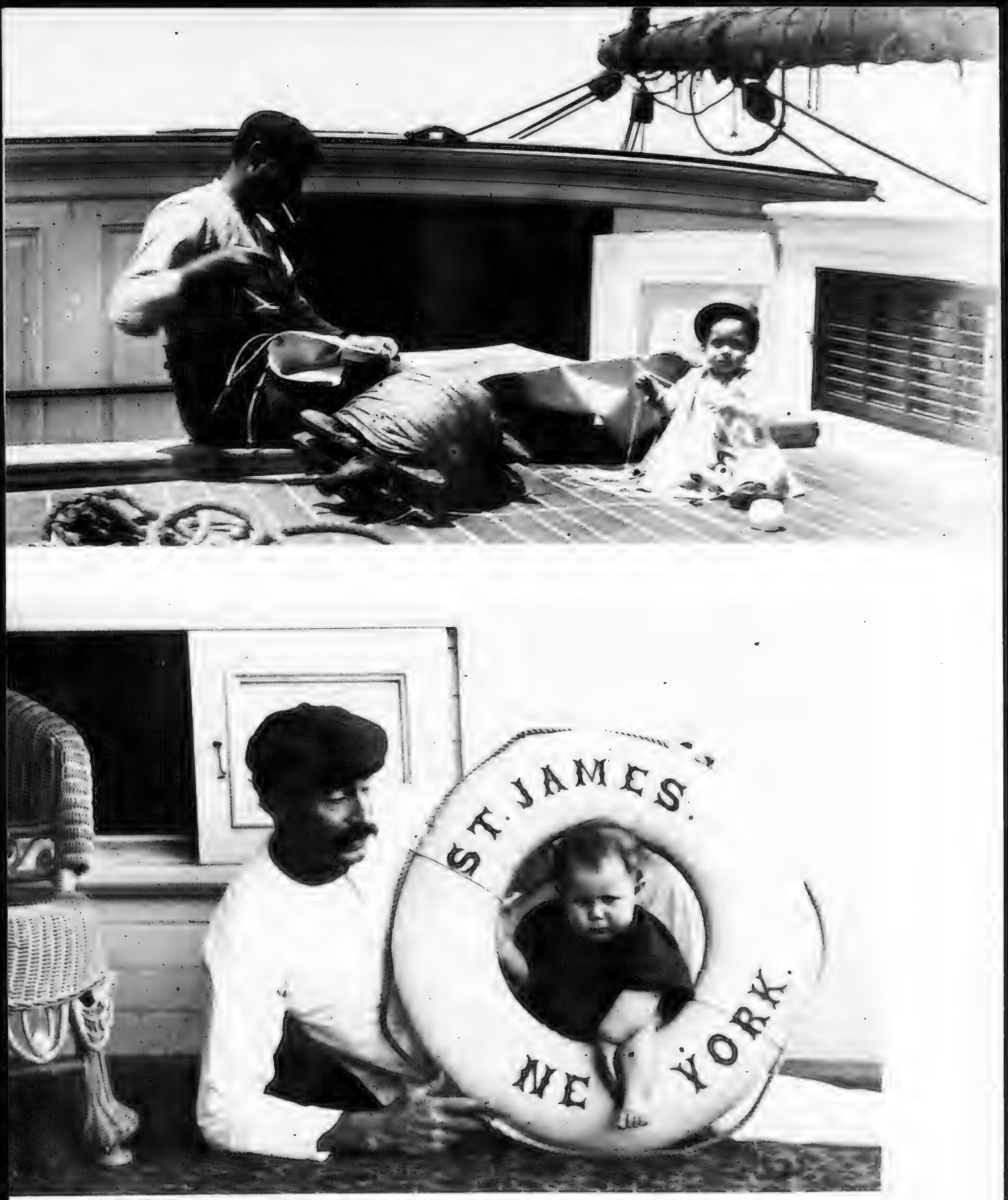
infant daughter—is altogether unique. The glass-plate negatives were all taken and developed aboard ship by Captain and Mrs. Robert Tapley. The ship was the "downeast" bark *St. James*, a fine representative of the great wooden square-riggers built in Maine for the West Coast trade. The pictures were taken between the sailing of the *St. James* from New York on May 12, 1900, and its arrival at San Francisco on October 18—a rather slow 159-day Cape Horn passage.

Unfortunately, we have no first-hand written account of this voyage or of family life aboard the *St. James*. But we can pass along to you the opening words of Fred B. Duncan's excellent and recent reminiscence (*Deepwater Family*, Pantheon Books, 1969) about his childhood aboard the "downeast" ship *Florence* in the years just before the turn of the century: "No one has ever been luckier than I in his birthplace. I was born aboard the three-masted deep-water sailing ship *Florence*, of Bath, Maine, as she lay tied up to Green Street wharf at San Francisco, California, awaiting an expected rise in shipping rates that would make a cargo of wheat to Liverpool, England, a profitable loading."

A sailing ship at sea was a small, small world, self contained, bounded by the circle of an unbroken horizon. It was in these circumstances that the human warmth of family life softened the crushing burdens of responsibility for the safety of the ship itself and its men, the lonely responsibility otherwise unshared in the long and lonely voyages.

And it was in these circumstances that a shared and responsible family intimacy often flowered. In sixteen thousand miles from port to port, in 160 days beyond the society of other families, the shipboard family in the after cabin was apt to develop that kind of priceless unity that made a ship-reared child say, "No one has ever been luckier than I . . . ."

No one can ever really calculate the importance of the shipboard family in those last years when sail still carried the burden of a busy world's commerce. These photographs of one ship, one family, are no more than a partial memorial to the often forgotten courage of an age that bloomed and passed when the West was just starting to grow up. &


ST. JAMES.
NEW YORK.

Fresh for the captain's table. . . . When a Cape Horner put to sea there was apt to be a bit of a barnyard atmosphere about the decks. But chickens and pigs would all be gone long before the Golden Gate hove in sight. At the right, Agnes Tapley in her Fourth of July best, back in the days when the American national holiday counted for more than trumped-up twentieth-century protocols for the handling of the Flag. Yes, this is the way it was—Old Glory draped in glory, all to the glory of the days when the stars and stripes flew at the gaff above the homes of the greatest seamen and seawomen in the history of the "long passages."

Anchored off Hong Kong, beneath towering Victoria Peak, the "downeast" bark St. James was a steadfast bit of sober New England at the other side of the earth.

XUM

A Taint from Technocracy

L. W. Douglas

Although not many people are aware of the protracted and acrimonious conflict between Arizona and California over the allocation of the waters of the Colorado River, many are probably familiar with the less protracted but equally controversial and often bitter struggle over the construction of more dams on the Colorado River—especially a low dam at Bridge Canyon which inundates not an inch of the Monument or the Park or any feature of unique beauty or scientific significance. The second part of these related controversies was temporarily resolved in 1968, when Congress was persuaded to prohibit construction, without its specific consent, of any dam on the Colorado River between Glen Canyon and Hoover dams.

It is paradoxical, if not contradictory, that while conservationists (I catalog myself as one) have hailed it as a great success, the legislation provided for a project which could damage the singular beauty of Lake Powell and its colorful escarpments. The way in which this project will contaminate and foul the general area is not fully recognized.

Among other provisions, the legislation of 1968 authorized an appropriation for the construction of a huge fossil-fuel power plant near Page, Arizona—about three miles from the shores of Lake Powell. It seems reasonable to presume that the smoke plume from this enormous plant may pollute the waters as well as the atmosphere over and around the magnificent cliffs that form the littoral of the lake.

Although the coal which will be burned in the plant is reported to be of relatively good quality and remarkably low in sulphur, therefore generating small amounts of sulphur dioxide, there will be a substantial and clearly visible stream of smoke belching from the 700-foot stack. It is unlikely that southerly winds will carry smoke in sufficient concentrations to cast a veil over the Grand Canyon National Park. On the other hand, when the atmospheric conditions are propitious, it is quite probable that the visibility over and around Lake Powell will often be perceptibly reduced and the beauties of the area seriously obscured.

A twenty-three-story power plant (according to reports), with accessories, will constitute a hideous industrial monstrosity, completely repugnant and permanently damaging to the beautiful scenery of the region. The Southwest's thirst for power can be quenched without besmirching a rare scenic panorama.

L. W. Douglas is a native son of Arizona and former U. S. ambassador to the Court of St. James

Because THE AMERICAN WEST is convinced that it is neither possible nor desirable for a magazine of history and conservation to separate the life of the past from the demands and hopes of the present, "Page 48" has been created as a continuing feature of editorial opinion —opinion that hopefully will not only illuminate truth but reinforce the understanding that we are, after all, only what our history has made us. Contributions are invited; they must be signed, and the editors reserve the right to accept or reject all submissions.

THE AMERICAN WEST REVIEW

Three Views of the Western Experience

BY JOHN L. SHOVER

THE word *frontier* appears in the titles of all three of these books, but each approaches this important and controversial concept differently. The first presents the romantic legend of the frontier as seen through the eyes of novelists and poets. The second, a textbook designed for college use, treats the concept of the frontier as dogma—an organizing principle that integrates and explains the course of American development. The third, a series of scholarly essays by former students of one of the distinguished historians of our time, Professor Paul W. Gates of Cornell University, explores the processes through which free land has been developed and exploited in America. Only the last is a wholly satisfactory and rewarding volume.

"For Americans," Durham and Jones write, "the frontier has always been an ambivalent symbol." This ambivalence is manifest in the choice of literary works that make up their anthology. The selections, both the well known and the obscure, are enjoyable and relaxing reading; but since the concepts that supposedly integrate the book—frontier, symbol, myth—remain undefined, the criteria used for selection remain a mystery. For example, the story "Roger Malvin's Burial" takes place in the forests of pioneer New England, but it testifies to Nathaniel Hawthorne's obsession with guilt and responsibility, not to the environmental setting. Since the selections are undated, the unwary reader might conclude that William Bradford and John Steinbeck were contemporaries. The organizational scheme, classifying the various selections around "The Forests," "The Midwestern Frontier," "The Mountains," "The Old Southwest," "The Far West," and "The Cattleman's Frontier," implicitly commits the editors to their own vague frontier concept.

The function of the anthology becomes then to illustrate the importance in American writing of a theory already postulated, not to examine its validity or to explore its significance. Does the literature of the American West mirror what actually was, or does it mirror the moods and needs of the writers and the audiences to whom they addressed themselves? Have Americans sought in the legend of the frontier a reconciliation where the individualism of the cowboy and that of the enterprising nineteenth-century businessman become one; or where violence, deplored in theory, is romaticized in practice? Is the legend of the West an expression of our national nostalgia for a simpler world? Challenging questions such as these are not examined here.

The Frontier in American Literature edited by Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones *(Odyssey Press, New York, 1969; 393 pp., study questions, reading list, notes, paper $2.95).*

Frontier America: The Story of the Westward Movement by Thomas D. Clark, 2d ed. *(Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1969; 836 pp., illus., maps, biblio., appen., index, $12.50).*

The Frontier in American Development: Essays in Honor of Paul Wallace Gates edited by David Ellis *(Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1969; 425 pp., foreword, works by Paul Wallace Gates, index, $11.50).*

Professor Thomas D. Clark has enlivened that most dreary of historical genre—the college textbook—with some sprightly writing and rich detail. The second edition modifies one published in 1959 only by adding seven pages of text at the end and supplementing the bibliography with twenty-five items. Regardless of a few qualifications in the added pages of the 1969 edition, the author's commitment to the frontier and the Westward Movement as dominant forces in American development is unequivocal. The central figure for Clark is, as it was for Frederick Jackson Turner, the pioneer. The author, however, is intrigued by the details of exploration and military engagements; one might wonder why the details of the Black Hawk War merit more attention than the land grants and economic importance of the railroads in the West.

Frontier America might profitably be juxtaposed to Lee Benson's "The Historian as Mythmaker: Turner and the Closed Frontier," the initial chapter of the third book under consideration here, *The Frontier in American Development.* To do so brings into sharp focus the central assumption of Clark's text: environmental determinism. Pioneers, Indians, and buffalo seem destined to play out a particular role whose limits are proscribed by the land and its natural products. Social and cultural institutions, likewise, seem to arise from the interaction of man and land, with a decided emphasis on land.

With few qualifications *Frontier America* is a description of the encounter of rugged men with a rugged environment. For Clark, this is not a proposition to be tested; it is a postulate to be accepted.

The unifying theme in the fifteen essays dedicated to Professor Gates is the economic development of unoccupied land in the territorial United States. Most of the essays built upon Gates's lifetime of study dedicated to identifying, classifying, and assessing the role of capitalists on the frontier. Among other

Continued on page 60

XUM

Looking Westward

BY JOSEPH E. ILLICK

GENE Marine's *America the Raped* (Simon and Schuster, $5.95) is subtitled *The Engineering Mentality and the Devastation of a Continent*. Before opening the book, I was reminded of my own undergraduate career as a civil engineer: there was no mention of the word "ecology" nor any illusion to the conservation of natural resources. My father, a civil engineer with some literary pretentions, once wrote about the profession: "Building bridges, spanning chasms/ Envied by all protoplasms." That sums it up well. An engineer's creed and his aspiration is to create what nature has left undone, presumably for the benefit of man. He builds railroads, highways, dams, bridges, causeways—endlessly. One day my surveying teacher remarked, "The most difficult road access to obtain is through a cemetery." Human values were definitely not part of our curriculum.

America the Raped does not focus on the formal preparation for an engineering career, though a chapter might profitably have been devoted to the subject. The professed concern is with a broader topic:

> there is, in America, such a thing as an "engineering mentality." . . . It is the simple, supposedly pragmatic approach of taking the problem as given, ignoring or ruthlessly excluding questions of side effects, working out "solutions" that meet only the simplest definitions of the problem.

Marine's perspective is that of the ecologist, the man to whom the side effects are of primary importance. His major target is the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, though politicians and other spokesmen of special interests also get their raps. In case after case, Marine ably demonstrates that the Corps simply does not know or care what it is doing beyond the matter-of-fact construction of a project. It considers neither the aesthetic nor the ecological effect, not to mention "the idea of the conservation of genetic information—the idea that we ought to keep every species of animal or plant alive, and in its own ecosystem, because we have no way of knowing what characteristics of what animal or plant or microbe may someday prove to be in some way valuable."

In the realm of the more blatant destruction of the landscape, it is a sad commentary on western politicians that when the Wilderness Act was under discussion in the House of Representatives in 1964, they let their eastern colleagues carry the burden of defending it against an amendment proposed by the mining interests. The amendment won, and the conservationists lost. Two years later it became known that Kennecott Copper Corporation planned to locate an open-pit copper mine in the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area in Washington.

Unfortunately, neither the existence of an engineering mentality nor the facts of its outrageous operation comes as much of a surprise. I have heard it many times before. Marine's former boss at *Ramparts* writes in a publisher's blurb: "*America the Raped* is in the good, old-fashioned muckraking tradition." Muckraking, the building of dams, does not disturb my ecosystem. A less old-fashioned approach is needed, with less rape and more seduction.

One fresher and more subtle avenue suggested by Marine is to penetrate the semantics of destruction. Political language in our time, George Orwell wrote in 1946, is the defense of the indefensible. When lumber people substitute the euphemism *harvest* for *cut*, we should not be misled. When the secretary of the interior backs off from the defense of the redwoods because "we would be picking a fight instead of picking a park," we need to realize that he is not turning a phrase, he's turning coat. But for a classic example of obfuscating language, note the plea made by a Colorado lumber representative: "Lock up the western forests in barren, single-use preservation, neglect them, subject them to nonmanagement . . . and as surely as God has made them, they will suffer the blight and devastation of our cities." Who can doubt the correlation between the quality of language and the quality of purpose?

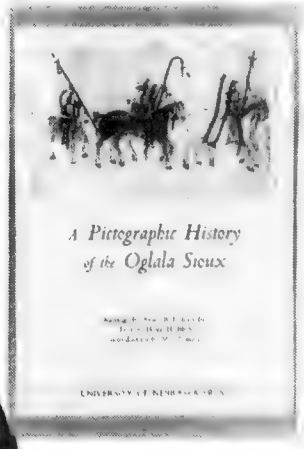
Another alternative to journalistic muckraking is the graphic re-creation of a problem, such as the exhibit entitled "Can Man Survive?" currently being shown at the Museum of Natural History in New York. Drawing on the example of rock music palaces across the country, the designers have used light and sound to involve and ultimately overpower the senses of the viewer. The initial message, simply narrated and beautifully illustrated on screen, concerns the delicate balance of oxygen, water, and food on the earth. The next point is less pleasant and less pleasantly made: man, alone among the creatures, threatens the self-regulation of nature. A few steps later the viewer finds himself in the midst of man-made structures and noises, all of which are at once familiar and intrusive, accentuated by a neon sign flashing "never had it so good." These are photographs and movies on the problems of pollution and overpopulation, lights and sounds of increasing tempo, punctuated by clichés of progress: "growth and industry are the keys to the future." One emerges wondering whether man *can* survive and anxious to contribute to the solution of the problem. The enterprising young ladies who work at the exhibit, recognizing the quandary of the viewers, originally placed literature from conservation societies at the exit, only to have it removed by their superior who apparently considered it a political act!

Another exhibit of interest, displayed last summer at the University of Vermont, was Edwin Owre's "Pollution Machines," some twenty ingenious sculptures which delight children and adults alike and prompt some hard questions from the younger set. In my limited experience, exhibits such as these are more popular in the East than the West.

Finally, muckraking cannot be—and does not pretend to be—a substitute for careful study of the issues. Marine suggests that his readers begin with Eugene

"No student of the Sioux and other Indians of the plains can afford to miss this important publication"

Van Allen Bradley,
Chicago Daily News



A PICTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE OGLALA SIOUX

Drawings by Amos Bad Heart Bull
Text by Helen H. Blish
Introduction by Mari Sandoz

With an epic sweep which may properly qualify it to stand beside the literary masterpieces of other peoples, this collection of 415 drawings by a cousin of Chief Crazy Horse constitutes a unique record of all aspects of Sioux life.

The original pictographs, preserved here in photographs, lie buried with the artist's heir, after Sioux custom. The text provides background, identities and interpretation of the symbolism. "A splendid record.... A magnificent and carefully analyzed presentation of the work of an excellent artist. The combination of good technique and scientific authority recommends this book to both the scholar and the general reader"—J. O. Brew, *New York Times Book Review.* "A monumental first in the literature of the American Indian...remarkable in workmanship, in characterization and in the sad and noble story it relates"—*Los Angeles Times.* Slipcased, 32 full-color plates.

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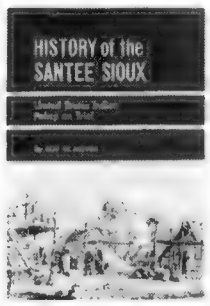

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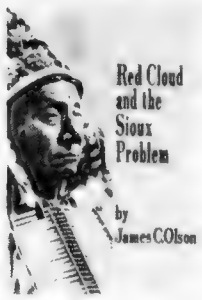

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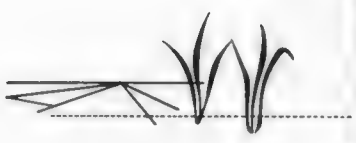

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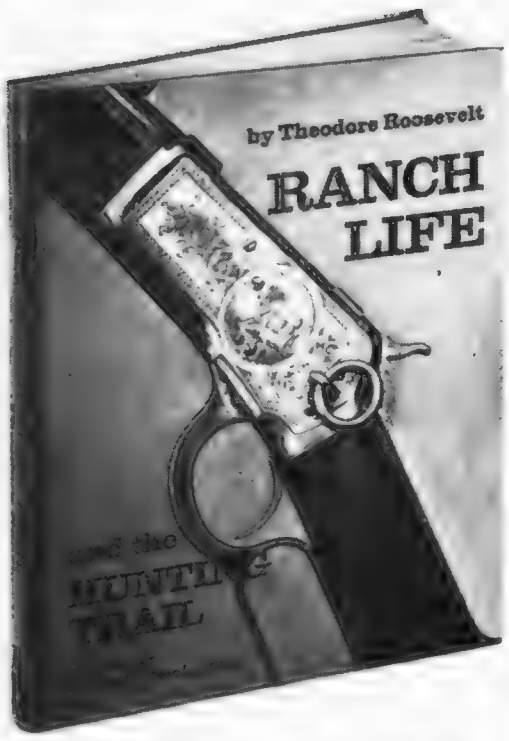

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Odum's *Ecology* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, $3.25), which is truly a test of the conservationist's mettle, a challenge to the intellect. But this, after all, is Marine's fundamental concern: the quality of American life.

IN MY column of September, 1967, I reviewed Richard Crabb's *Empire on the Platte* and Harry Chrisman's revised *The Ladder of Rivers: The Story of I. P. (Print) Olive*, two books essentially concerned with the same subject. At that time I showed what proved to be an unfortunate preference for Crabb's work. Mrs. Ruth Van Ackeren of North Platte, Nebraska, immediately questioned my judgment on the basis of Crabb's alleged plagiarism of Chrisman's first edition. Meanwhile, Chrisman filed suit against Crabb and his publisher (who clearly was unaware of the malfeasance) and received a favorable judgment, which establishes beyond a doubt that *Empire on the Platte* was indeed plagiarized from *The Ladder of Rivers*. (I have checked with the Nebraska State Historical Society, supposed possessors of the documents on which Crabb's book was based only to find the documents do not exist.) I therefore must apologize to Mr. Chrisman for my oversight, simply noting that to err is human, and to air grievances is only fair—but embarrassing!

An Edge of Wilderness

BY ROGER G. KENNEDY

A Place in the Woods by Helen Hoover *(Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1969; 282 pp., illus., foreword, $5.95).*

MRS. Hoover, like Thoreau, does not purport to have gone off into the wilderness. She withdrew to the edge, the far edge of civilization, and from there she looked in both directions, toward wilderness and back. Thoreau spent his year a mile from the village, hearing the sounds of trains and farming near at hand. Mr. and Mrs. Hoover lived between a county road and a popular, resort-lined lake, drawing help from neighbors, food and kerosene and gasoline and small machinery from the village, mail and money from the city. And that is why her book is so valuable. She is not comparing notes with hermits and trappers. She has written *A Place in the Woods* to tell us what it is like to withdraw for longer than a weekend or a week, further than "the lake," more venturesomely than vacation or sabbatical. She is telling us how it would be at the end of the next long step, to live with books (and music, by now, I suspect), with occasional electricity and sporadic telephone, with factory food and secondhand machinery; but, at the same time, to live in the presence of ermine and fishers, deer and bear, blizzards, frost, spring flood, and fire.

Mrs. Hoover is a craftsman. She sets out to make a book, and she must be judged on how well she carries off that intention. Her foreword is a challenge to pedants among reviewers and nature writers. She has no intention of being "scientifically silly," or of engaging in teleological nonsense, "anthropomorphism and . . . piffle." Beware, gentlemen, this is no amateur, no gushing lady telling us how to make friends with a chipmunk. Later she tells us that she writes for money—started writing, in fact, only because she was broke and her skill as a metallurgist was moot in the woods, and her husband's skill as an artist had lost its occasion and its market through ill-health and ill-luck. Mrs. Hoover does not dissemble. She is a professional.

She is not Isak Dinesen. Nor is she Henry David Thoreau. One begins her book looking for the evidence to support the pastry praise of the jacket reviews: " . . . exquisitely—delicately jeweled prose"; "Mrs. Hoover . . . writes like a poet." But one encounters a series of phrases which she or Mr. Hoover or their editor should have excised if she was to be set in the high company of great writers. Curtains are "spotless"; she is "scared stiff"; people are "like that inside, too—clear and shining, straight and strong"; we see a "stately spruce," a "towering pine"; a squirrel "scolds," and a sympathetic breeze "sighs" a sentence later.

But as one reads further, respect for the lady increases. She has a sharp nose

for smells like anise, a good eye in distinguishing colors. Her hand feels the differences in the fur of mice and of weasels; and when she is writing in full swing, she can make a fine sentence out of what she has sensed: "Unfamiliar voices sang around us—the snap of a whip, the whine of a ricochet, the cry of strained thin steel. We followed these sounds to the shore where rime clung to the trees and rocks, dense and of the whiteness of sandblasted marble." And she does what she sets out to do, to tell us how it was for them, what it felt like to have a squirrel's claws in your neck, to be hungry and so tired that "ideas float, lightly and with great clarity," to know the animals without sentimentality or giving them more than their due. She is writing to the fullest extent of her talent, and she is a success.

Mrs. Hoover is an intelligent, disciplined woman who has considered her experience. Her husband's graceful drawings not only delight but also underline her conclusion. Her text is concerned about scale, about perspective. His pictures show us the Hoovers as they appeared to the animals among whom they came as intruders. We look from a bear's nest, a deer's thicket, a squirrel's tree. At the book's pivot we learn: "It didn't matter that the forest dwarfed Ade and me. It only mattered that we should recognize our smallness. As long as we remembered that, we should know our limitations, as all men should know their own, and we could live here as safely and naturally as though we had been born with wings or paws." &

Roger G. Kennedy *is a vice-president of the University of Minnesota and author of* Men on the Moving Frontier, *published by American West Publishing Company in 1969.*

The Urgent West: The American Dream and Modern Man by Walter Allen *(E. P. Dutton, New York, 1969; 244 pp., $5.95).*

BY DAVID LUNDBERG

THE American Character is an overworked subject. Books on it have become so plentiful recently as to be a drug on the reading market. Thousands of such works by economists, historians, sociologists, and psychologists annually pour from the nation's publishing houses, flooding book clubs, stores, and libraries. And yet few of these are really worth reading. For all the ink spilled on this topic, for all the theories put forth regarding the effect of social mobility, economic abundance, and child-rearing techniques on American culture, Tocqueville's *Democracy in America,* written over a century ago, still remains the best book on the subject. Over the years, despite recent advances in the social sciences, little of substantive value has been added to its analysis.

So it is with some weariness that one turns to Walter Allen's *The Urgent West.* Don't be misled by the title. As used by Allen, *West* refers not to the nation's western regions but rather to the United States as a whole. The book purports to be a "new and original" interpretation of what makes Americans uniquely "American." Actually it is nothing of the sort. Compared with other contemporary works of this nature, especially those by David Riesman and David Potter, *The Urgent West* makes dull reading. Its analytic method, for example, is quite ordinary. Allen, avoiding economic and sociological data, discusses America's unique qualities in terms of common themes present in the nation's history and literature. Though nicely handled, this approach can hardly be described as new. Students of American Studies, to name only one group, have long employed similar techniques.

Allen's thesis regarding the American Character is equally unremarkable. Stated briefly, it runs as follows: As a new country cut off from European society, the United States has lacked a sense of tradition and history, and as a result has always been unsure of its identity as a nation and a people. Throughout their history, Americans have constantly engaged in a search for their identity, a search which, beginning in the seventeenth century and continuing down to the present, has been a central theme of the nation's literature. Moreover, because of the worldwide social dislocations caused by industrialism, this theme has in recent times assumed a broader significance: it has come to represent the condition of modern man. Thus America's historical dilemma—its lack of identity—has achieved universal meaning. Our national plight has now become that of western civilization. Allen therefore concludes that "The great subject of American literature is not American

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man only, but also western man. The American dream has become the common property of the western world."

This is an attractive thesis. Its validity appears fairly self-evident. Certainly anyone familiar with American literature knows that identity, both personal and national, has been a persistent concern of American writers. Yet this can hardly be considered a new idea. For the past forty years or so historians and literary critics have recognized its importance in the development of American society. Allen, however, ignores this fact and presents his thesis as an original idea derived from his own analysis of American culture. This seems highly disingenuous, especially since his bibliography lists several works which explicitly deal with the problem of identity. Thus, despite the dust jacket's claims to the contrary, *The Urgent West* contains little that is new. On the whole it is merely a restatement of a number of widely accepted interpretations of the American Character.

But perhaps this is unfair to Allen. As an English novelist and critic, he may have written the book for British, not American, readers. If so, it is admirably suited for such an audience. Its discussion of American literature and history provides an excellent introduction to both subjects. Nevertheless, since the copy under review is being published in this country, it deserves to be judged by American, not English, standards. I can only conclude therefore that most readers in this country will be disappointed, if not bored, by *The Urgent West*. For six dollars they deserve a work of more originality.

David Lundberg *is in the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley.*

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Wyoming: A Political History, 1868-1896 by Lewis L. Gould *(Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1968; 298 pp., biblio., index, $10.00).*

BY ROBERT G. DUNBAR

NEVER before has the political history of Wyoming during the later years of the territorial era and the early years of statehood been explored and presented in such detail. The central character in this narrative is Republican Francis E. Warren, who served twice as territorial governor (the only exception to carpetbag rule) and was elected to the United States Senate in 1890, serving a two-year term. In 1895 he was again elected and began thirty-five years of uninterrupted service as United States senator.

It is Professor Gould's thesis that Warren, recognizing the aridity and the paucity of natural resources in Wyoming, was a firm advocate of federal aid for state development. He believed that only a united Republican party under his direction could obtain this assistance and, therefore, that party unity must replace the fractious political feuding of the territorial years. Consequently, he devoted his efforts to the creation of a political machine that could obtain federal appropriations. These efforts laid the basis for Warren's later years of service as "a pork barrel artist" who dispensed a continuous flow of money to stimulate economic development—and to provide for periodic reelections.

Thus, Professor Gould is critical of historians who have contended that the key to Wyoming politics is their dominance by the Wyoming Stock Growers Association or the Union Pacific Railroad. "There can be no doubt," he writes, "that these organizations wielded tremendous influence and could usually frustrate attempts to whittle down their power. But the truth is that politics in Wyoming was not framed in these terms; the concern of most people was not with the excessive power of the cattlemen or the railroad, but with their falure to provide in and of themselves an economic reward commensurate with the expectations of those who settled in the West." The dominance of the cattlemen does supply the key to the politics of the early 1880s, whereas the sensed need for economic assistance provides the key to a later period.

Although Professor Gould contends that Warren was primarily concerned with the politics of development, there is little in this book concerning the impact of his efforts upon the economic development of the state. The author's heavy reliance upon the papers of Francis Warren and Willis Van Devanter gives the book a political bias that leaves the reader yearning for a fuller presentation of the views of Joseph Carey and those of the leaders of the Democratic party. These limitations notwithstanding, the book is a well-written addition to the historical literature concerning Wyoming, supplementing the corresponding chapters in Professor T. A. Larson's authoritative *History of Wyoming.*

Robert G. Dunbar *is professor of history at Montana State University.*

Essays in Illinois History: In Honor of Glenn Huron Seymour, edited by Donald F. Tingley *(Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1968; 167 pp., notes, index, $5.00).*

BY J. LEONARD BATES

ROUGHLY a decade ago this reviewer was fortunate enough to see Glenn H. Seymour portray a thoroughly convincing Stephen Douglas, "the Little Giant," in the celebrated debates with Abraham Lincoln. It is not surprising, therefore, to read that Professor Seymour has been called "a strolling minstrel of history," or that he has "entertained, as well as instructed, thousands of people ranging from women's clubs to scholarly gatherings of his colleagues." This well-researched volume, containing much that is both instructive and enter-

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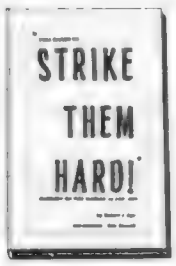

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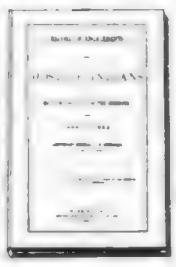

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taining, is an appropriate tribute to Professor Seymour on his retirement from teaching at Eastern Illinois University.

Donald F. Tingley, the editor, and six colleagues at Eastern Illinois University have contributed these seven essays, ranging widely in Illinois history. Tingley's contribution deals with "Anti-Intellectualism on the Illinois Frontier." He asserts that even today the United States bears a "deep-seated contempt for the intellectual." This contempt can, in his view, be traced to the frontier experience, though he recognizes the existence of other interpretations.

In "Lincoln's Particular Friend," Lavern M. Hamand describes the very interesting role of Ward Hill Lamon as a bodyguard to President Lincoln. While serving as marshal of the District of Columbia, Lamon took upon himself the duty of patrolling the White House grounds and sleeping at the President's door with bowie knives and pistols. Unfortunately, he was out of town on a special mission when the President went to Ford's Theatre.

Neil Thorburn tells the story of Governor John P. Altgeld as "Promoter of Higher Education in Illinois." He points out that Altgeld is too often remembered for the Pullman strike and other controversial aspects of his career. Not so dramatic but equally important was his determination that the state of Illinois have a great university at Urbana-Champaign.

Possibly the most useful of the essays is a systematic examination of "Urban Immigrant Lawmakers and Progressive Reform in Illinois," by John D. Buenker. As Joseph Huthmacher showed for New York and Massachusetts, Buenker demonstrates in Illinois that the progressive impulse was by no means limited to the middle class.

Robert E. Hennings contributes some fresh views on the campaign for the presidency in 1924. He believes that, with just a little luck, Hiram Johnson might have carried the primaries in Illinois and elsewhere, and have had a real chance in the convention contest against Coolidge.

In this same period John H. Walker was a prominent "Labor Leader from Illinois," and he is the subject of an analysis by Professor John Keiser. A longtime official of the United Mine Workers, and president of the Illinois Federation of Labor, Walker did not realize his potential. One reason was his rivalry with the formidable John L. Lewis.

The last article, by David J. Maurer, is a cogent description of "Unemployment in Illinois during the Great Depression."

All of these pieces, though focused nicely on one state, have considerable significance for students of national history. ☙

J. Leonard Bates *is professor of history at the University of Illinois, Urbana.*

The First and Second United States Empires by Paul L. Beckett *(Washington State University Press, Pullman, 1968; 107 pp., appendix, index, $2.50).*

Imperial Texas: An Interpretive Essay in Cultural Geography by D. W. Meing *(University of Texas Press, Austin, 1969; 137 pp., preface, intro., acknowledgments, sources, illus., index, $4.50).*

BY JERALD A. COMBS

THESE books deal with aspects of American imperialism, a topic most Americans reject, claiming that except for a brief aberration in the 1890's which resulted in the acquisition of the Philippines, the United States has been anti-imperialist. Our westward expansion involved the conquest and settling of relatively empty lands rather than the domination and exploitation of dense and developed alien civilizations, they maintain. Besides, the territories we acquired were brought into the union as equal states instead of being relegated to perpetual colonial status. Finally, Americans say, we have spilled our blood protecting the independence and self-determination of nations against true imperialist powers like George III's Great Britain, Hitler's Germany, and Stalin's Russia.

The First and Second United States Empires vociferously rejects this vision of America's past. It argues that the United States has always been an imperialist power, with this imperialism passing through four stages. America's first empire extended from 1778 to 1848 and included the area from the Appalachians through the first tier of states west of the Mississippi River. It involved the conquest and exploitation of the Indians. The territories carved from the Indians' domain were ruled as colonies in every sense of the word, with Congress exercising absolute sovereignty over their in-

habitants through a governor appointed and dismissed by itself. America's second empire lasted from 1848 to 1890 and included the territories in the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountain region, and the Pacific slope. The third empire, extending from the 1890's to about 1920, included Alaska and a number of islands and concessions in the Pacific and the Caribbean. The present fourth empire, according to Eblen, encompasses most of the world.

Eblen's book is concerned exclusively with the first and second empires. It amounts essentially to an analysis of American territorial government prior to the admission of America's contiguous territories to statehood. If one ignores some of the more tendentious rhetoric about American imperialism, this is a valuable book. It is carefully researched, thoroughly documented, logically organized, and clearly if dully written. Anything one would want to know about America's territorial governments can be found here. Eblen not only examines the written laws pertaining to territories but looks behind the legal structure to the way these governments actually worked. In a careful comparison of the many territorial governments, he concludes that the governor, who was intended by Congress to be something of a dictator, quickly lost his real power to local oligarchies within the territories. Eblen is quick to point out, however, that this rise of local oligarchies, even when it was formalized by the acquisition of the right to form a territorial legislature, did not mean an emergence of real democracy. America still ruled its territories as a colonial empire.

D. W. Meinig's *Imperial Texas* makes some of the same points regarding Texas that Eblen makes about the United States but somewhat less tendentiously. He looks upon Texas as an empire in itself—maintaining a separate identity from the United States, often seeking to expand its territory and influence, containing within itself and ruling over different cultures and life patterns just as other empires have done. Meinig is interested in describing and accounting for this Texan feeling of a separate identity and in tracing the origin and development of the differing cultures that have arisen in eastern, western, southern, and central Texas; for this reason he subtitles his book "An Interpretive Essay in Cultural Geography." It is a unique and fascinating book, accurate, suggestive, and beautifully written. It does not gloss over the faults and injustices of Texas imperialism—the racism, the gross materialism—but it approaches these factors with a consciousness of human frailties and avoids the tone of self-righteous indignation that mars Eblen's book. All in all, this is an outstanding work and highly recommended.

Jerald A. Combs *is associate professor of history at San Francisco State College.*

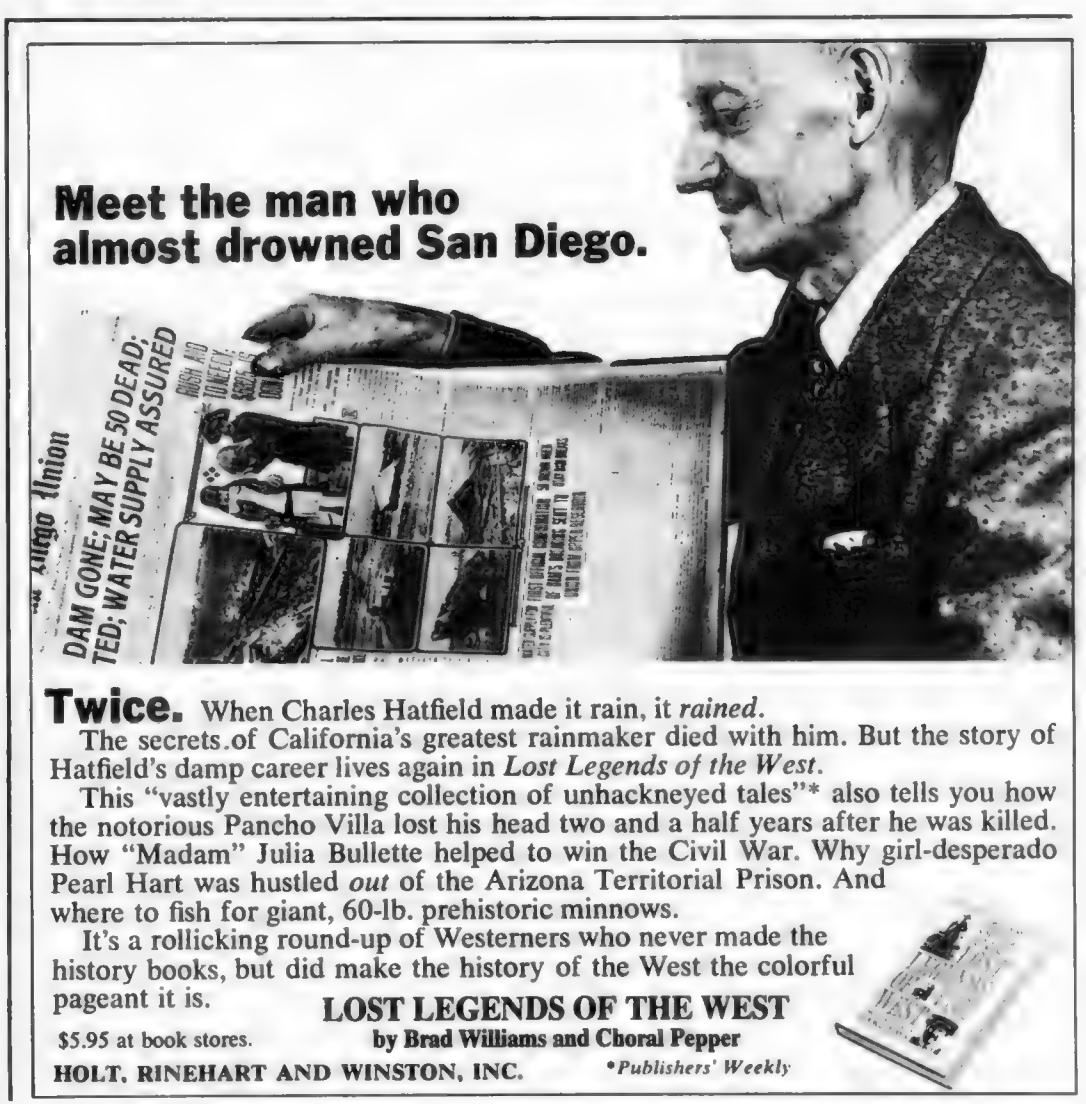
Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains by the Earl of Southesk *(Charles E. Tuttle and Co., Rutland, 1968; 420 pp., intro., preface, errata and addenda, illus., $5.00).*

BY WAYNE ROBERTS

THIS book is the product of a well-kept journal recording the experiences of a Victorian nobleman while on a pleasure excursion in the frontiers of British North America. Devoid of any formal duties or sense of mission, devoid also of any Tocquevillian aspirations to comprehend a new nation, his remembrances do not lend themselves directly to the purposes of the serious historian. They were intended, and should be judged, essentially as a combination travelogue and diary of the hunting expedition of a self-indulgent aristocrat. Even his descriptions of the various forts which dotted the West are marred by his upper-class disdain for their social or economic importance. All we hear of is the geniality and hospitality of his hosts, with little of their worldly concerns and how these affected patterns of settlement.

Nevertheless, this book can be of interest to more than the antiquarian who delights in the obscure. In his own time, the detailed nature of the earl's observations made his book useful to railway surveyors. For ourselves, they can serve as reminders of the rugged terrain and isolation that later would have to be conquered by settlers. His descriptions of the various Indians he encountered, while often marred by ethnocentrism if not racism, contain much that would be valuable for the anthropologist. The style is lucid and pleasant, and the plights and vignettes are such as to provide hours of pleasant reading enjoyment.

Wayne Roberts, *a Canadian, is a graduate student at the University of California.*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BOOKS IN BRIEF

By Ferol Egan

Fighting Rebels and Redskins: Experiences in Army Life of Colonel George B. Sanford, 1861–1892 by Colonel George B. Sanford, edited with introduction by E. R. Hagemann *(University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1969; 355 pp., illus., maps, notes, biblio., index, $7.95).*

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT account of what an old soldier really thought about war. Sanford wrote about roughshod reality. His descriptions of Civil War battles leave no doubt about the wholesale slaughter which took place; and his comments about campaigns against the Modocs, Bannocks, and Nez Percé make it quite clear that he was disgusted with this phase of army duty. "For every Indian war," he wrote, "there is a cause; too often that cause has been bad policy, bad faith, bad conduct, or blundering on the part of the whites."

In addition to Sanford's statements regarding the brutality of battle and the mistreatment of the Indians, he also gives a fine picture of military life in the last century: the lonely frontier outposts smack in the middle of nowhere, the days of endless pursuit, and the look of the dead and dying. All that we have seen countless times on the big screen is here—including the company band playing "The Girl I Left behind Me." The only reason that much of this rare journal sounds familiar is that Hollywood has done such a good job of capturing the trappings of the time. For a refreshing change, don't see the movie—read the book.

The California Gold Rush Diary of a German Sailor by Adolphus Windeler, illustrated by Carl Cristendorff; edited with introduction by W. Turrentine Jackson *(Howell-North Books, Berkeley, 1969; 236 pp., notes, index, $7.50).*

CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH literature is filled with diaries, journals, and letters. But most of these items are limited to descriptions of the journey to the new El Dorado. Such is not the case with this account of two young German sailors who reached San Francisco in December of 1849 as working seamen aboard the *Probus*—169 days out of New York harbor.

During four seasons in the mines, Windeler kept a diary of what it was like to be in on the big "rush," and his friend Cristendorff recorded what he saw in primitive drawings. Through the work of these two talented amateurs we are given a rare glimpse of life in the mines. Here is the day-after-day backbreaking labor, the eternal boredom of sameness, the plagues of illnesses brought about by unbalanced diets and too many working hours in icy river water, and the brutality of instant justice in the mining camps.

All the harsh reality of the gold rush is highlighted in this remarkable account. And two things are made quite clear: mining was a damned tough way to make a living, and it was no way to make a fortune unless you were a natural high-roller on any crap table.

As an added bonus, this book contains excellent notes and a highly readable introduction, in which Jackson gives the background of these sailors and synthesizes their own descriptions of the long sea voyage around the Horn.

Ally of Cortés by Fernando de Alva Ixtlixochitl, translated with foreword by Douglass K. Ballentine *(Texas Western Press, El Paso, 1969; 141 pp., endpapers, illus., maps, appen., glossary, biblio., $5.00).*

THIS INCREDIBLE BOOK is the story of the intrigue that made it possible for Cortés and his small army to conquer a nation that should have wiped them out without much difficulty. Told from the Indian point of view by a descendant of a traitor, *Ally of Cortés* tells of Mexico's Fifth Column and its leader, Texcoco's Prince Ixtlixochitl.

In the conquest, Cortés had three things going for him: the Aztec belief that he was a god, his own belief that God was on his side, and a country that was ready for the overthrow of Montezuma. This combination delivered to Cortés's command Indian armies of thousands of men who made it possible for him to achieve victory.

While this quite handsome volume contains only Book 12 of Fernando de

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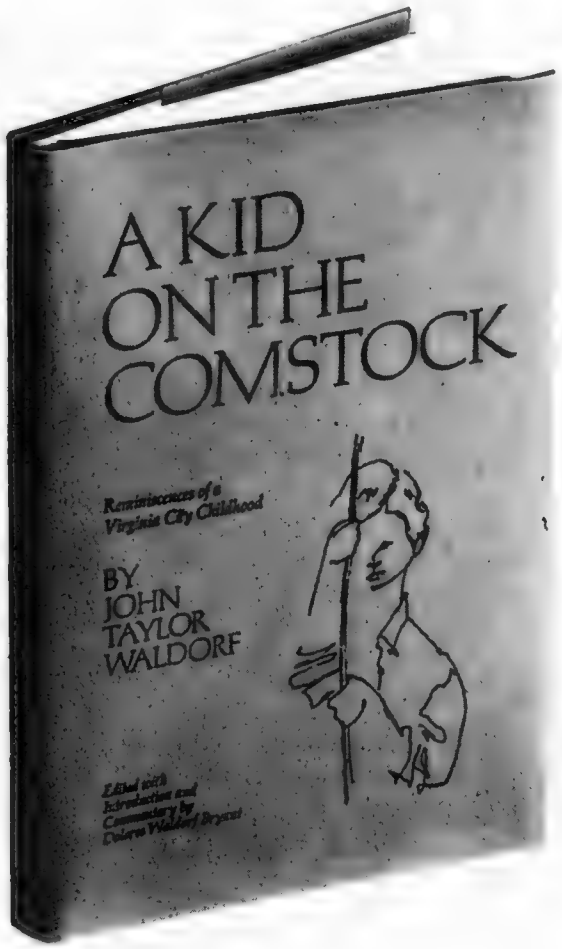
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BY JOHN TAYLOR WALDORF
Edited with Introduction and Commentary by Dolores Waldorf Bryant

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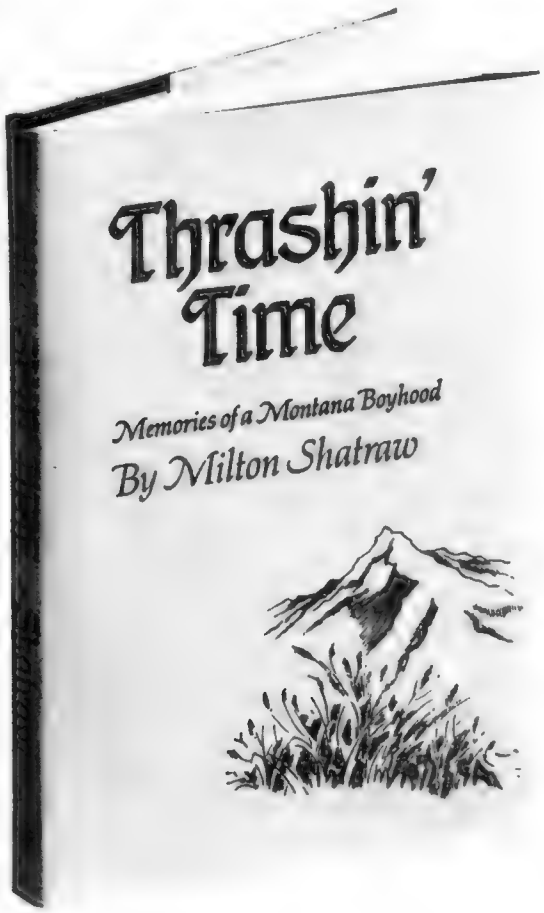

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Texas under Arms: The Camps, Posts, Forts, & Military Towns of the Republic of Texas, 1836–1846 by Gerald S. Pierce *(Encino Press, Austin, 1969; maps, notes, biblio., index, $10.00).*

FOR WRITERS, SCHOLARS, and general readers interested in Texas history, this is a solid reference work. Pierce has done his homework very well indeed. His short sketches of the various military installations during the decade of the Texas Republic are packed with information. Some specialists will find entries too short for their own favorite forts or camps, but that is the nature of any book of this type. Altogether, this is a splendid job and a most welcome guide to yet another phase of Texas history.

WESTERN EXPERIENCE

(Continued from page 49)

contributors, Leslie Decker challenges the central role of the pioneer-homesteader in the frontier process when he argues that "on the mid-continent frontier . . . almost all the early comers to any area were speculators first and homesteaders second or not at all." David M. Ellis demonstrates that while railroad land-grabbing was a reality, railroads, forced by suits in the federal courts as late as the 1940s, were compelled to return to the public domain millions of acres they had failed to open up for preemption according to the provisions of the original grants. In two more essays, Henry Cohen and Margaret Beattie Bogue show that the much maligned absentee landlords had their share of economic and administrative problems, and that despite these they were sometimes promoters of innovation and pioneers in tenant education. Morton Rothstein introduces a new dimension into studies of the frontier by demonstrating that, beginning in the 1840s, the dominant economic motif for the agricultural West was that of aggressive expansion.

The contributors to *The Frontier in American Development* have freed themselves from romantic legend and weary dogma. In their attempt to understand the development process and assess the interacting roles of homesteaders, federal land administrators, capitalists, railroad promoters, and Congress, they are demythologizing the history of the frontier and creating a past that is both meaningful and usable.

John L. Shover *is in the Department of History at the University of Pennsylvania.*

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE VIGILANTE STYLE: II

(Continued from page 25)

accomplish (a few). The nebulous Law and Order Party that sprang up concurrently with the committee was of course staffed by the fourth category and now and again supported by the third. This fourth camp was made up of some very incompatible types, one wing being composed of those who would have agreed with the ends of vigilance if the means could have been legal; the other, of those who were more or less allied with the forces that vigilance sought to destroy. William T. Sherman, who later distinguished himself as one of history's masterful quellers of civil disturbances, was among those who objected only to the committee's methods. After a couple of weeks of futile negotiations to secure federal assistance from Admiral Farragut at Mare Island and arms from General Wool at Benicia Arsenal, Sherman resigned as commander of the California militia, disgusted not only by his impotence but by his colleagues.

Among Sherman's more unsavory associates was David Terry, formerly of Texas, one of that class of roving southern politicos (of which Senator Gwin was the chief) who found in California opportunities which had been denied them in the crowded statehouses, customhouses, and other public hog troughs of their native states. Judge Terry, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the State of California, was one of those to whom both the organization and objectives of the vigilance committee were anathema; worse, its composition seemed to Terry an unforgivable affront to professional politicians, that new gentry of the Old South. In the presence of Sherman, an associate of many of the leading members of the vigilance committee, Terry denounced the vigilantes as a bunch of "damned pork-merchants." Surrounded by advisors such as Terry, Governor Johnson led the Law and Order Party to an unrealistic stand against vigilance. Abandoned by supporters such as Sherman, the Law and Order people were free to indulge themselves in feeble raging and inconsequential counterrevolutionary plots. One of these pointless plots culminated in an altercation between Judge Terry and a vigilance patrol. A shot was fired, probably accidentally and certainly harmlessly; but Terry, no doubt believing that his time had come, determined to take at least one of the scoundrels with him. Drawing his favorite Bowie knife from his vest, he spitted Vigilance Officer Hopkins through the neck.

Thus, on the evening of June 21, 1856, the Great Vigilance Committee found itself with a prisoner that it could punish only at deadly peril to itself. It had been the strategy of the committee to assault criminal politics by sweeping out from under the machine the lowliest and dirtiest mechanics (those that it was easiest to "get the goods on"), to expose the nature of the mechanism, and to frighten the leaders and office-holders into at least temporary impotence. It hedged against any possible reaction to its "lawlessness" by avoiding direct action against any but the most obvious felons. Now it had a Supreme Court justice who might say that he had only acted to defend himself against a gang of thugs: a representative of the highest law in the state who had done no more than defy an illegal body. Yet for the committee meekly to release Terry would be to display precisely that weakness which it could not afford to show, for its awesome front of power, purpose, and integrity was essential to its ends.

In this dilemma, the vigilantes followed a course both bold and cool: they instantly seized every cache of arms known to belong to the Law and Order forces in San Francisco, and held Judge Terry pending the recovery or death of the wounded Officer Hopkins. To be sure, Terry was brought to trial prompt-

ly, for it was a part of the vigilance law that any assault upon one of its officers was a grave offense: but the trial was spun out over a month. By the time the final judgment was rendered, two more murderers had been hanged, nearly every sign of resistance to the committee stamped out, Hopkins had recovered, and Coleman apparently had decided that vigilance might adjourn. Judge Terry was convicted by the Executive Committee and, after a week of wrangling with the Board of Delegates (which was all for vengeance, and blood if possible), was simply released. Both the release of Terry and the decision for adjournment suggest that the one force that the committee might fear—Federal intervention—loomed as a more and more real possibility. It was time to get out of business before they acquired another white elephant.

The second vigilance committee went out with as much showmanship as it had come in. On August 18 its four regiments of infantry, two squadrons of cavalry, battalion of artillery, battalion of riflemen, battalion of pistolmen, and police battalion paraded before the citizenry of San Francisco. The military organization then disbanded. The executive committee remained in indefinite session, holding meetings until November of 1859.

THE ORGANIZATION and conduct of the Vigilance Committee of 1856 stamped it as one of the most remarkable *ad hoc* popular institutions the United States has ever seen. Certainly no other organ of popular justice ever conducted its affairs with such impressive probity and ended its efforts amid such general applause. If some observers (for the most part in places far removed from San Francisco) condemned the *theory* under which the committee operated, deploring the very notion of the citizenry's taking the law into its own hands, there was almost no respectable or informed opinion which could find serious fault with the committee's *deeds*. But far more remarkable than the conduct of the committee of 1856 was its successful achievement of its long-range goal. The vigilance committee of 1851 hanged four thieves and ran a band of robbers out of town, yet within a few months criminals found the San Francisco climate as congenial as ever. The second committee hanged four murderers and deported a bunch of polling-place ruffians, and for ten years thereafter San Francisco was remarked one of the best-governed cities in the United States.

The astonishing feat of "permanently" cleaning up San Francisco politics was accomplished by a joint effort of the committee and a group of prominent citizens who had supported but not joined it. Though the vigilantes publicly denied any intention of meddling in politics, it would appear that there was a very close relationship between the appearance of a political party agreeable to vigilante goals and the disbanding of the committee. On August 8 the executive committee privately decided to adjourn the military organization; on August 11 a mass meeting of citizens organized what was later known as the "People's Party"; and on the 13th the vigilance board of delegates was notified of the decision to disband.

The People's Party, which controlled San Francisco politics for a decade, was organized along lines every bit as unorthodox (one might say "un-American") as the vigilance committee. At the public meeting twenty-one citizens were appointed to a nominating committee which held permanent and almost absolute power in the party, perpetuating itself by appointing its succession before each election. It met in secret to work up its slate of candidates for the current election, choosing nominees both from the regular parties and among independents; it submitted its ticket without discussion to a popular meeting, which had the option of accepting or rejecting the *whole* slate of candidates. It is difficult to believe that this strangely effective, nonpolitical political organization was not the product of the calculating imagination of William T. Coleman.

The new city administration, elected in the fall of 1856, immediately introduced reforms most pleasing to the "pork-merchant" mentality. The entire cost of operating the city government in 1856–57 exceeded by less than 30 percent the cost of supporting the *volunteer* fire department in 1854–55; funds for street improvements were doled out at the rate of about one dollar for every thousand that had been squandered two years before; even the school budget was satisfactorily pruned. Taxes were reduced. City officials, released from the time-consuming demands of imaginative jobbery, were so attentive to public affairs that not so many were required. The police force, now headed by the former chief of the vigilance police, for the first time made the streets really safe for the nocturnal wayfarer—even though these streets were no longer lit by the merry glow from dance halls and gambling palaces, or by street lamps, for that matter. For, in the words of H. H. Bancroft, "The gas company ran up enormous bills against the city and, as usual in such cases, protested they could take no less. Thereupon the new officials turned off the gas, and each supervisor, judge, or other public nightworker brought his tallow dip, whose dim but honest flicker argued a brighter, purer light than any hitherto flashed by brazen iniquity."

Thus flickered the dawn of a new era.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This article, and its companion piece in the January number of *The American West*, are extracted from the draft of a more general survey of Gold Rush San Francisco, and as a result it has been impossible to include substantial relevant material on the nature

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of San Francisco business, business fraud, land speculation, land fraud, politics, political fraud, and other such oddly interrelated topics as the operation of the volunteer fire department—all of which cast some additional light upon the narrative of the two celebrated vigilance committees.

Indeed, modern historians of the great events of 1851 and 1856 would do well to blush at their inability to improve much upon the narrative and commentary provided by H. H. Bancroft in *Popular Tribunals* (2 vols., San Francisco, 1887)—and it is unlikely that Bancroft's account can ever be topped as sound *narrative*. George Stewart not long ago completely overhauled the sources for the Committee of Vigilance of 1851 (contemporary newspaper and other accounts, the original records of the first committee, as well as the small additional light that modern scholarship has thrown on the events), with results that are excellent but chiefly superior to Bancroft in that the volume is readily available at local bookstores (*Committee of Vigilance: Revolution in San Francisco, 1851;* Boston, 1964).

If the first committee will not easily yield up its secrets, the second (the "Great") must always remain more obscure in its deliberations because it took the precaution of destroying its documents. Yet, if the documentary narrative of the actions of the first committee serves as sample, then little was lost, as the intimate and brilliant narrative of Bancroft again covers the essential action of the affair.

It has been suggested in the first of these articles that Soule, *et. al.*, the authors of *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York, 1855) refrained from offering information that might get them shot. Evidence of such restraint appears in such matters as the treatment of the infamous "Peter Smith" land sales. A casual investigation initiated by me a few years ago revealed that the chief buyers at this sale (during the height of the first vigilance committee excitement) were Peter Smith himself (obviously an agent for others, as his name never subsequently appears as a man of means or influence) and David C. Broderick, political boss of the town. It is impossible that all of the solid, promotion-minded vigilantes could have been ignorant of the implications of this sale.

Again, James King of William was one of the public officials involved in this sale. One could do well to investigate the possibility that his murder by an associate of Broderick (the ostensible *raison d'etre* of the second committee) may have more to it than the Christ-like qualities of King and the total depravity of Casey. Altogether, the operations of these two great vigilance committees—greatest in the history of the West, of America, and (in terms of their limited success) perhaps the world—have never been vigilantly examined by western historians in terms of their social context.

The vigilance committees are not seen as social phenomena (outside of solid and thorough narrative) because historians have looked just to the specific actions of the committees, or have taken the narrative of these actions simply as part of a general narrative, or have again simply picked up the narrative as it applies to individuals involved.

A large number of biographies offer no insights (beyond the occasional accidental jewel, such as the fact that some of the nefarious Adams & Co. papers eventually turned up under a wharf leased by Coleman), but they must be mentioned in such a bibliography. Judge Terry is treated well but not revealingly in a study by A. Russell Buchanan (*David S. Terry of California,* San Marino, 1956). Other major figures have escaped such reasonable scholarly study, though they have their handy biographies: Coleman, Broderick, Brannan, Sherman (the last in a recent volume by Dwight C. Clarke for the California Historical Society).

Josiah Royce's *California: From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco* (New York, 1886) is as good a *commentary* on the nature of the two committees as there is, though it was written without full benefit of Bancroft's narrative. J. S. Hittell *(History of San Francisco and Incidentally of the State of California,* San Francisco, 1878) says shorter what both Bancroft and Royce have to say. William S. Ellison in his *A Self Governing Dominion* (Berkeley, 1950) has revisionist suggestions, which are picked up, but by no means clarified or substantiated in John Caughery's brilliant introduction to *Their Majesties the Mob* (1960). Ellison and Caughery have less to go on than I have found: which is not saying much for any of us.

THE VERY-AMERICAN MILITANTS

(Continued from page 10)

as nothing more than erratic Reds. The Wobblies' reasons for supporting prohibition did not differ radically from the arguments of the middle-class drys. According to C. H. Lambert, a leading California Wobbly, in 1916, prohibition would "make labor more efficient" and provide more work for members of the union. He predicted victory for two prohibition amendments then up for referendum in the state, with the implication that Wobblies would support them at the polls.

The Wobblies also regarded the saloon as the stalking ground for detectives and thugs hired to provoke strikers into brawls. During a strike against contractors laying track for the Canadian Pacific Railroad in 1913, the union ordered a boycott of the saloons. The chief of police of Grand Junction, Colorado, observed that the Wobblies of his acquaintance "will not permit a member to drink and travel with them." And the organization eventually adopted a bylaw which provided:

> Any officer or employee of any part of the Industrial Workers of the World seen in public in a state of intoxication shall, upon sufficient proof, be at once removed from his position by the proper authorities having jurisdiction over such an officer or employee, and upon conviction, shall not be eligible to hold office in any part of the organization for two years thereafter.

One wonders if the American Legion had any regulations so prim.

After prohibition became a fact, the "lawless" IWW sometimes contributed its services to enforcing the law. During a strike in the Grays Harbor District of Washington in 1923, a Wobbly local informed "all bootleggers and gambling houses" that "you are hereby given notice to close up during the strike or drastic action will be taken against you." Wobblies in Portland, Spokane, and Seattle embarrassed the mayors of those cities when they offered to help close down the towns' many speakeasies. Earlier in 1923, IWW locals in Portland had a lighthearted fling when they demonstrated in protest outside a well-known "soft-drink establishment." They were arrested.

It is not the purpose of this essay to deny the Wobblies their romantic heritage and their place in the revolutionary tradition. The legends are factual as often as not, and they

rank among the most exciting in the American experience. And the Wobblies were, as they said, "true blue" revolutionaries. They envisioned the total reconstruction of American society on a design which they esteemed as infinitely more democratic, equitable, and humane than what they saw around them. Perhaps the point is that in its nervous conservatism America too often dismisses its revolutionaries as bizarre by definition, forgetting that a revolutionary, utopian streak runs through the fabric of American history like a color through a plaid: sometimes dim, sometimes bold, but always a part of the design.

The Wobblies were not a curious aberration in their time and place. They evinced a commitment to traditional American liberties more edifying than their enemies'. In practice, they displayed a respect for the law which they themselves believed that they scorned. Hardly ideologues, the Wobblies were pragmatic and practical. They were buoyed by the same optimism about the future as the progressives, and they even shared in the vagaries of the time. All of which is to make a point that would be downright silly if it were not so stubbornly ignored: the Wobblies were more like their contemporaries than either party cared to admit.

Joseph R. Conlin *is associate professor of history at Chico State College, Chico, California. He is author of* Bread and Roses, Too: Essays on the Wobblies *(1969);* Big Bill Haywood and the Radical Movement *(1969); and* American Antiwar Movements *(1968); and is presently collaborating with G. D. Lillibridge on* The American Experience, *to be published by Houghton Mifflin. His articles have appeared in* Studies on the Left; *the* Wisconsin Magazine of History; Science and Society; *and the* Pacific Northwest Quarterly.

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Those places and living things we've listed. You've heard of many. But others, like a slough that is one of California's last coastal estuaries, may be known only to a handful of people defending it from senseless destruction. They're all, however, part of the natural heritage of America's West. And all have been featured in the pages of **Audubon**, the magazine of the National Audubon Society—one of the oldest, largest, and most respected conservation organizations in America. Ours is the nature magazine with a goal. We state it simply: *For the conservation and appreciation of wildlife and wilderness, natural resources and natural beauty.*

Appreciation, indeed a celebration, is achieved through the finest full-color and black-and-white printing craftsmanship obtainable in America and abroad; through articles by the foremost natural history writers and scientists; through the most provocative and creative photography of the unspoiled Earth; through the work of the finest artists who portray the natural world. A single issue of **Audubon** is never less than 100 pages in scope.

Conservation—the concern for the total environment of man—comes through authoritative, investigative, unflinching reporting of the threats and inroads of the destroyers. **Audubon's** field editors and contributors await assignment to any conservation battlefield in the world. No despoiler is above concern—neither biggest government nor biggest business.

Your annual membership in the National Audubon Society —at $10 for an individual and $12.50 for a family—brings you six issues of **Audubon**. You will, in turn, be supporting the society's broad program of conservation education and environmental action. You will be making a commitment to a cause—the **Audubon** cause, and yours as well.

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FORTHCOMING IN

THE

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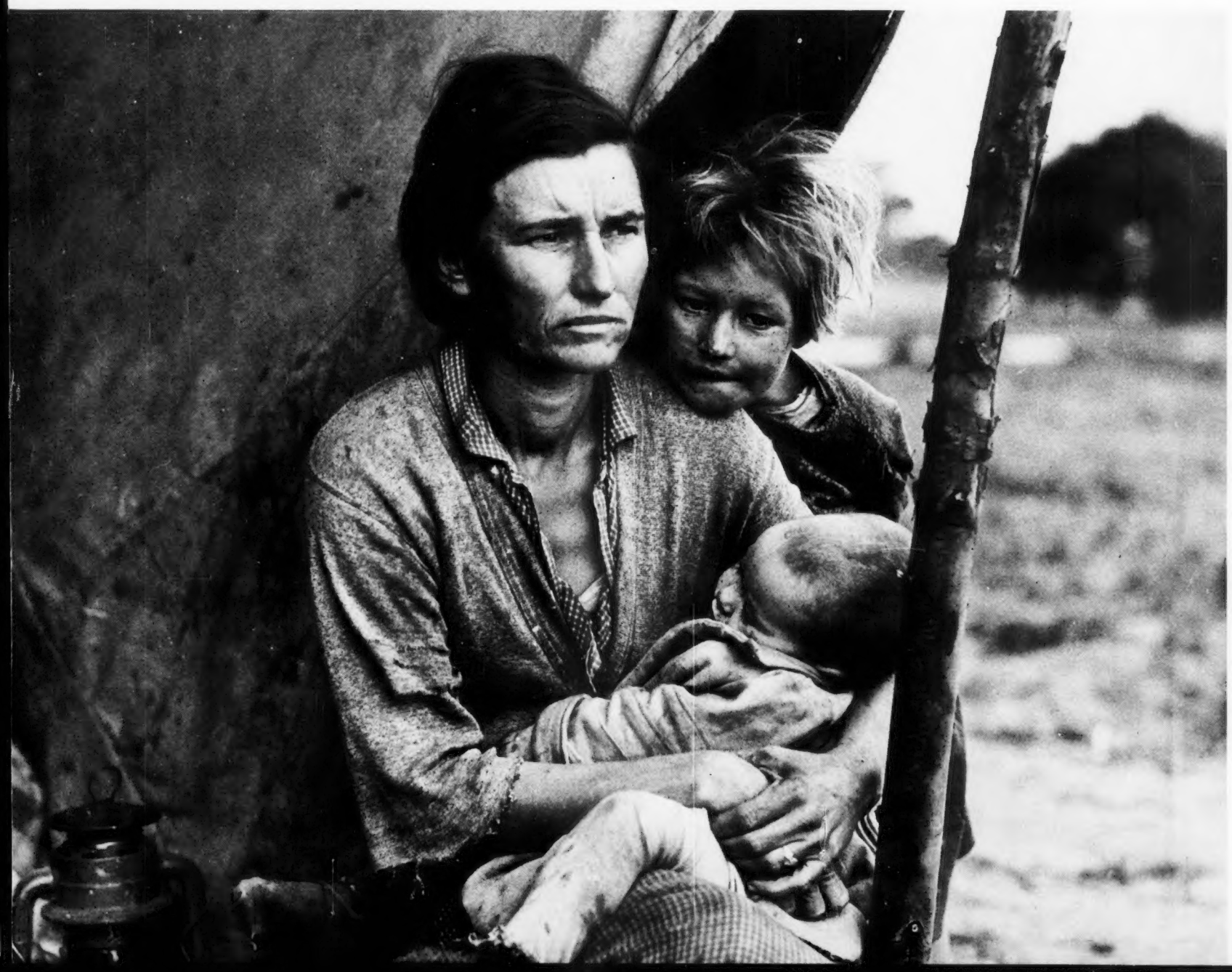
The Long Agony of the Great Valley. . . . Taking the life and work of John Steinbeck as a touchstone for memory and analysis, Carey McWilliams brings back the years of depression, oppression, frustration, and hope, called the 1930s—when California was the stage for a brutalizing conflict between agri-industrialists of the Great Valley and refugees from the Dust Bowl. As documentation for the themes illuminated by McWilliams, Paul S. Taylor presents a series of photographs by the great Dorothea Lange, including the long-since classic "Migrant Mother," and relates how the "chance visit" of this government photographer to a pea-pickers' camp in 1936 helped save the lives of twenty-five hundred starving field laborers and became a moving force in the creation of federally financed housing for thousands of landless, homeless workers, whose sweat made California's "factories in the field" one of the agricultural wonders of the world.

And: C. L. Sonnichsen on the Wyatt Earp Syndrome; Ferol Egan and W. H. Hutchinson on the life and cartoons of J. R. Williams; Richard Reinhardt on the rowdy life of the railroad brakeman; and a photographic profile of some boomtowns in the mining West that are no more.



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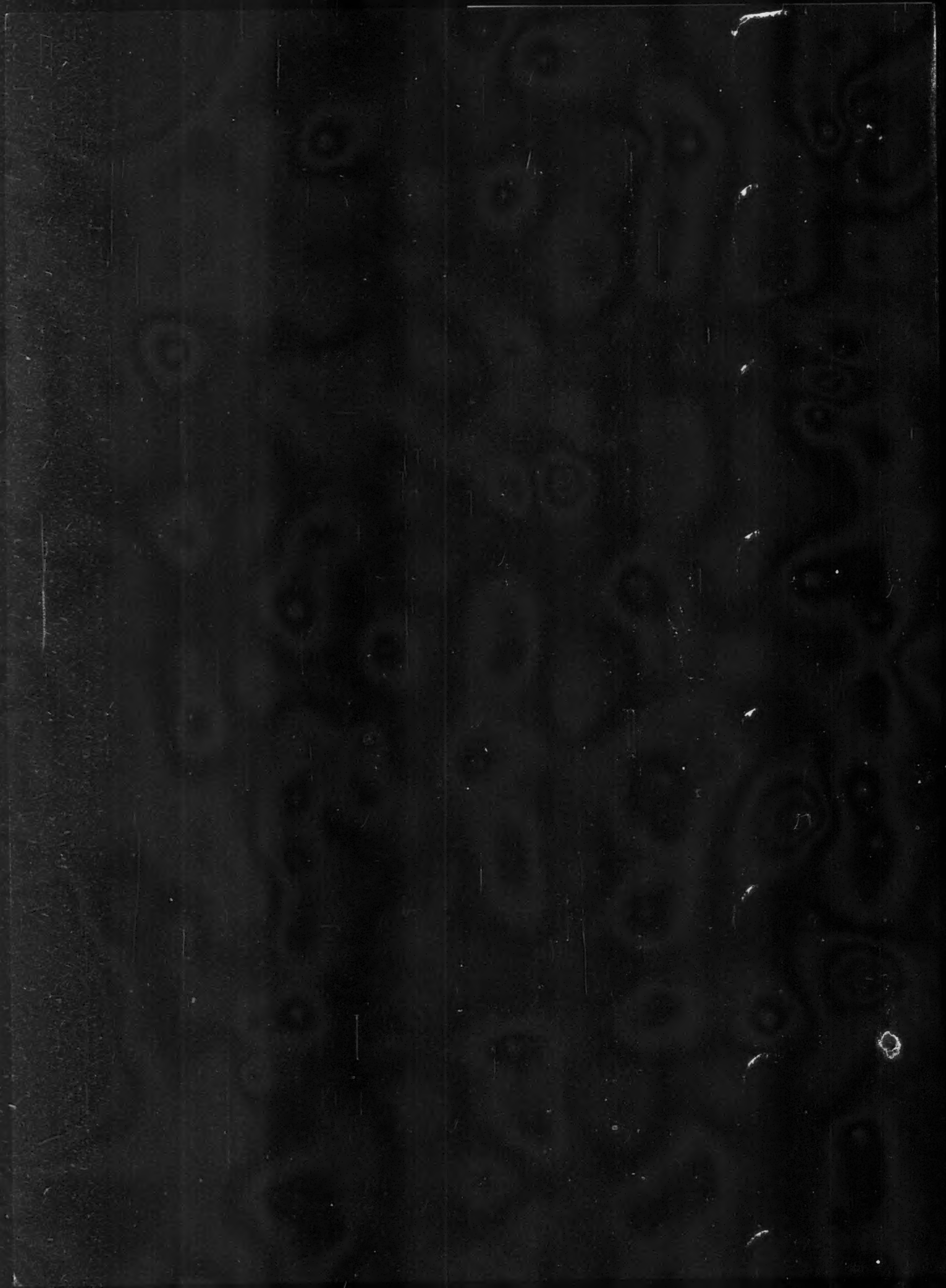

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